

**THE CITY AND THE SLUM: AN ACTION  
RESEARCH ON A MOROCCAN AND A  
ROMA XORAXANE' COMMUNITY IN  
ROME.**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

This work is an action research that deals with the theme of urban ethnic poverties, with particular reference to the Italian phenomenon of the Roma encampments.

The study is important because through the research on a single case study, the encampment of “Casilino 700”, I had the possibility of investigate and evidentiate the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion through the analysis of both the encampments population and problematics.

The long follow up of this research, which begun in 1992, allowed me to conduct an in-depth study and evaluate the policies enacted on behalf of statutory bodies and NGO's who are entrusted with the duty of programming support and empowerment interventions toward Roma communities.

In the course of this work I have shown how Roma in Italy have been for decades the object of a plan of spatial and social segregation which has had *de facto* state support and which has crystallised the conditions of social and economic exclusion of this minority.

The research ends with a series of practical proposes for immediate integrate interventions that ought to be enacted at different levels in order to overcome the emergency and security-oriented approaches which have instead characterised the last twenty years.

## **DEDICATION**

This work would have not been possible without the good advices and the fatherly guidance of my friend and former Mentor Prof. Roberto De Angelis, to whom this thesis is dedicated.

For any inadequacy or error, the responsibility is entirely my own.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS:

AMA Azienda Municipalizzata Ambiente (Garbage Removal Services) .....	153
ASC Agenti Salute Comunitaria (Community Health Workers).....	233
ASL Azienda Sanitaria Locale (Local Health Services).....	214
CCIAA Camera del Commercio, Industria, Agricoltura e Artigianato (Italian Chamber of Commerce) .....	133
CCV Centri Cittadini di Vacanza (City Holiday Resort).....	230
CIE Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione (Centers for Identification and Expulsions).....	277
CIR Centro Italiano Rifugiati (Italian Refugees Centre) .....	221
CNA Confederazione Nazionale Artigianato (National Confederation of Artisans) .....	106
CPT Centri di Permanenza Temporanea (Center of Temporary Welcoming).....	277
GRA Grande Raccordo Anulare. The ring which surrounds the city's periphery .....	13
IACP Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari (Institute for Popular Housing) .....	90
ISTAT Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (Italian National Institute of Statistics).....	56
NAE Nucleo Assistenza Emarginati .....	75
SDO Sistema Direzionale Orientale. Urbanistic project for viability which begun in 1963 and later enlarged based on the Law 396/90 "Roma Capitale" .....	150
TAR Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale (Regional Administrative Court) .....	135
USI Ufficio Speciale Immigrazione (Rome Special Office for Immigration).....	164



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The themes of social exclusion and extreme urban poverties have always represented a relevant area of interest for social and political scientists.

This topic has recently gained even more importance, and the already existing production on this theme has been enriched by many recent contributions from international authors coming from different disciplines and backgrounds<sup>1</sup>.

This production attests the topicality of a phenomenon that apparently passed safely through the whole XIXth century to present days.

Bidonvilles and shanty towns have not disappeared at all, but quite on the contrary, they have become a distinctive feature of certain urban spaces, especially those surrounding today's third world megalopolis.

The presence of these informal dwellings and the population they host are so consistent a phenomenon that this issue became a matter of interest for international agencies such as the UN and the FAO, which have produced different important researches on the problem of urban slums informal dwellings (UN, 2002, 2003, 2005; FAO, 2004).

All these studies and reports have mostly concentrated on the analysis of the new ghettos in third world countries, but we must not forget that different forms of informal dwellings have been quite common also in many European nations. Examples of these

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<sup>1</sup> See the works of L. Wacquant, A. Sayad and M. Davis, just to quote the most important.

antecedents are the bidonvilles which existed in France and in Italy from the post war period and for all the '70's, and which were inhabited by external and internal migrants'.

In today's enlarged Europe, small and big shanty towns continue to exist only in some eastern European states and in some regions of the Mediterranean, but in the so called "old" Europe area, these dwellings have gradually disappeared, after state's policies of social welfare and progressive inclusion.

Yet there are places in Europe where these settlements still exists, like in the case presented here with this research.

This work deals with one of these shanty towns, Casilino 700, a large multiethnic settlement that was situated in the eastern periphery of Rome and occupied by Roma and Moroccan migrants.

Informal dwellings and self built bidonvilles have represented an historical and constant characteristic of the city of Rome<sup>2</sup>, but present day's shanty towns represents completely new forms of ghetto, incomparable with the old ones studied by the Italian and French sociologists during the 70's. These former historical settlements have disappeared to be replaced by the new ones, inhabited by migrants and for the largest part by Roma.

The case of the Roma encampment of Casilino 700 described and analysed in this thesis, does not represent an exception or an isolated case, because in the year 2009 in Rome there were 100 Roma settlements of this kind registered by the Municipality<sup>3</sup>, to

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Municipality of Rome (2009) **Il piano nomadi** [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed February 2010].

which we must add many other small ones which have not been officially registered in the census<sup>4</sup>.

For this reason, the case of Roma in Italy is unique and it represents a completely original case, whose topicality must be added to the list of the many Italian anomalies which will be discussed further in this work.

This tragic originality lies in the fact that the ghettos where Roma people are forced to live today (or more adequately, their *hyperghettoes*), have not been built spontaneously, but have been imposed upon them by local Italian institutions, which during the '80's, by means of different Regional laws<sup>5</sup>, created the so called "nomad encampments", and therefore we can speak of a *social construction of the ghetto*.

The study of this settlement therefore, ceases to be a report on a single isolated case, to become rather the magnifying lens through which investigates the phenomenon of urban poverties alongside the plans and the strategies enacted to contrast it.

## **1.2 Research background**

The first sociological studies on informal settlements and urban poverty in Rome were conducted during the '70's, when the Italian sociologist Franco Ferrarotti and his team undertook a series of researches in the Roman shanty towns of Valle Aurelia and Acquadotto Felice.

The inhabitants of these informal dwellings were all Italian citizens who had migrated from the South or from the countryside<sup>6</sup> in search of better life and work opportunities.

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<sup>4</sup> In Rome it is possible to see small settlements composed by one or two small huts or camping-vans. These small dwellings are not inhabited by Roma but by foreign workers.

<sup>5</sup> For the Lazio Region the Law is the **LR n.82, 24/05/1985** [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.torino.it/stranieri-nomadi/nomadi/normativa/regionale/lazio.pdf> [Accessed February 2010].

<sup>6</sup> In particular from Abruzzo and Molise.

After the policies of social housing enacted by the Municipality of Rome these former dwellings were abandoned<sup>7</sup>.

At the same time, during the '60's groups of Roma began to arrive from Yugoslavia. During this early arrivals, Roma families settled wherever was possible, mostly in abandoned plot of lands, and in some cases, on the former existing Italian shanty towns. From that moment, this temporary solution, became permanent.

Since these years, from the time when the first groups of Yugoslavian Roma arrived in Italy, up to the arrivals of the '90's after the Balkans war to the more recent migrations of Romanian Roma, Roma in Rome have always lived in encampments<sup>8</sup>, an unprecedented case, at least in the "old" European countries.

In spite of the well known fact that the Roma communities living in these dwellings none long since become completely sedentary, the local institutions have continued to offer them only this possibility.

Many of the Roma dwellings which still exist today, have been built and populated 40 or 50 years ago. For those who are living in the non authorized encampments there is no access to water, electricity, garbage removal and sewerage, but also for the ones who are living in the so called "authorized" encampments, life means to live in containers and in extremely degraded conditions.

For example the camp of Casilino 900 (a few hundred meters away from the Casilino 700 object of this thesis) was built in the '50's and formerly inhabited by Italians. It has

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<sup>7</sup> See par. 4.1.1

<sup>8</sup> An exception is constituted by groups of Italian Roma such as the *Abruzzesi* and *Napulengre*, which during the '70's have been given access to popular housing. Others, in the course of years, have also bought their own houses and apartments, although the largest number of Roma resides in encampments.

hosted more than 900 persons<sup>9</sup>, but for all the 40 years of its existence, water, electricity and garbage collection were available only from the winter of 2008.

The gravity and the urgency of these general conditions should have prompted immediate innovative institutional response, but the Roma question up to today remains open and unsolved.

The Rome's Municipal Council has already made public its will of destroying the existing encampments in order to build 13 new larger ones, outside the city's perimeter, that will host the many different Roma communities present today in Rome<sup>10</sup>. Once more, spatial and physical segregation seems to be the only proposal.

But this neglectfulness does not concern only statutory bodies. As a matter of fact, in spite of this dramatic and worrying situation, the case represented by Roma in Italy continues to remain a very marginal area of interest also for what concern both Universities and public and private Research centres.

As I will show in the following chapter dedicated to the analysis of the literature review, Romani studies in Italy have always been considered as a "niche area" for social scientists, and the large majority of the studies and publications produced have been mostly carried on by either linguists or by Cultural Anthropologist. There is therefore a significative lack of studies concerning the study of social change, the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion and the integration and social policies regarding this group.

This lack of focus found in relevant literature is on the other hand compensated by the many works of volunteers and NGO workers, who occasionally publish books and essays on their fieldwork experiences, while other works are produced by young

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<sup>9</sup> See Picture 5.8.

<sup>10</sup> Comune di Roma, Commissario Straordinario per l'Emergenza Nomadi (2009) **Il Piano Nomadi**. [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed March 2010].

undergraduate students from the social sciences area, who choose one of these topics for their graduate dissertation thesis.

Unfortunately these materials are scarcely useful for the social scientist either because of their non scientific approach<sup>11</sup>, or, as in the case of student's BA thesis, because they are very difficult to find unless they are published, an event which occurs very rarely.

As a Social Sciences researcher engaged in action research, and as an activist for Roma Rights, I have felt the duty of trying to fill this gap with my studies and with this research, documenting with the events that occurred at the Casilino 700 how members of the Roma group live today in Italy, and which are the most relevant issues concerning their access to citizenship rights.

### **1.3 The object of study**

This thesis presents the results of my fieldwork research which was conducted from 1992 to the year 2000 in one of largest multiethnic shanty town in Rome, the encampment of Casilino 700, inhabited by Moroccan migrants and Xoraxanè Roma<sup>12</sup>.

The object of this work is therefore the study of a place spatially delimited, an informal, self-built metropolitan dwelling that modern urban sociologists will without doubt define as a *hyperghetto*, according to the efficacious definition coined by Loïc Wacquant<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> We are dealing with a very atypical corpus of materials which ranges from the category of novel to that of the diary.

<sup>12</sup> Since the encampment's destruction in 2000, I have continued my research in the new authorized encampment where a part of the population of the former Casilino 700 was relocated.

<sup>13</sup> See par. 2.2

Although this settlement does not exist anymore, (having been destroyed in the summer of the year 2000), the questions that the phenomenon of the encampments raise remains very topical, while the state of emergency for Roma continues unchanged<sup>14</sup>.

Italy is not like other European countries, i.e. a state with a more or less well functioning welfare system and inclusive social policies for minorities, it is “Campland”, the land of the encampments, as Italy was nicknamed by a European Roma Rights Centre report (ERRC Report, 2000).

In fact, the former inhabitants of the Casilino 700 are still in Rome, displaced in another encampment built by the Municipality not far away from their former one, destroyed in the year 2000.

On a general level, the purpose of this research was that of studying both the phenomenology and the functions of the informal metropolitan settlements and of the national and ethnic groups who inhabits them, with a view on the processes of social exclusion and inclusion. More detailedly, this work deals in particular with the analysis of the Roma’s situation in Rome.

The indicators concerning Roma’s social exclusion are evident and undisputable: the whole Romani population in Rome (exception made for the Italian Roma and Sinti groups whose situation is different and will not be discussed here) is living in encampments and forced to live in containers, camping vans and huts, in spite of the fact that the near totality of the non Italian Roma have always been sedentaries.

Another indicator of inequality is the one concerning accesses to education. Of the 7.177 Roma presences<sup>15</sup> registered in the city of Rome, nearly half is composed by

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<sup>14</sup> For example the encampment of Casilino 900, built 40 years ago and formerly inhabited by Italians, was situated at a very short distance from the former Casilino 700 and was in the same desperate conditions. The last official list of the encampments in Rome can be found in Chapter Four, Table 4.8.

minors, and out of this number, less than a hundred Roma students have been enrolled during 2005 - 2008 in secondary schools<sup>16</sup>.

From the study of the relevant literature concerning Roma's general conditions in other European countries, I have had the possibility of comparing the diverse cases and I confirmed my hypothesis that although Roma's situation as a minority is in many countries certainly difficult, nowhere<sup>17</sup> like in Italy (and especially in metropolitan areas such as the Roman one presented here), is their access to citizenship rights so difficult and limited and their life conditions so dramatic and harsh.

For this reason my study has focused on the consideration of the multiple and interrelated factors which have all together concurred to determine Roma's current situation.

The situation which can be attributed to a whole series of different elements that will be analysed in the course of this work, and that I will summarise here very shortly.

Firstly, there are historical and cultural factors, tied to some Italian "anomalies"<sup>18</sup> (large presence of shadow and black economy, absence of a proper welfare system, a long tradition of housing informality etc.), secondly there are institutional responsibilities, accountable from the analysis of the social policies and finally of the specific interventions of statutory bodies toward this group.

The case of the Casilino 700 therefore, was an opportunity to examine wider aspects, as the events that occurred in this encampment are revealing a *paradigm*, a model of intervention that statutory bodies have enacted toward both Roma and migrants.

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<sup>15</sup> There are no detailed data on the number of Roma in Rome. Further, the Italian census system does not include the item "ethnic origin" but only the nation of origin, for this reason there are also no data on other indicators such as the access to work etc. etc.

<sup>16</sup> Comune di Roma. **Scolarizzazione nomadi. Anno Scolastico 2007-2008** [online]. These data are not anymore available on the Municipality's website but I have printed them when they were online. [www.comune.roma.it/repository/.../scheda%20rom%20a.s.%2007-08.doc](http://www.comune.roma.it/repository/.../scheda%20rom%20a.s.%2007-08.doc) [Accessed January 2007].

<sup>17</sup> The comparison is with north European countries of the "old" Europe.

<sup>18</sup> These factors will be examined in Chapter Four.



Considered under this light, this work also documents the Italian model of ethnic relations.

#### **1.4 Research questions: The aim of this study and the questions I pose**

This work has a double aim. On one hand, it represents a contribution to the study of urban poverties and in particular on urban multiethnic ghettos, thus documenting also the differences which separate these post industrial settlements from the “historical” post war French and Italian bidonvilles.

This research will document how today’s shanty towns represents absolutely new forms of ghettos, uncomparable with the classic ones that we came to know through the sociological literature, and in this sense it also will contribute to a more precise, less ambiguous definition of the term “ghetto”.

This expression in fact has been often used in a very generic manner, which extended and stretched its meaning regrouping under this definition also many other forms of social sufferings. An example of this “extended semantic” are the commonly used expressions such as “the banlieue ghettos” or the “ghetto-neighbourhoods of the periphery” (*quartieri ghetto della periferia*).

The second aim is that of studying Roma's conditions in Italy, and in particular in Rome, with special regard to the social policies that institutional, statutory bodies and NGO’s have put into practice during these years toward this minority<sup>19</sup>.

These objectives have been achieved by mean of studying a specific group, placed in a spatially delimited territory, which during the years of its existence has been the object of several institutional interventions.

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<sup>19</sup> Roma and Sinti in Italy have not been included in the list of the officially recognised Linguistic and Cultural minorities.

The analysis of these interventions has been the occasion to produce a critical review of the more general policies adopted by local governments toward Roma communities.

During the last 20 years, I have frequented nearly all the shanty towns inhabited by migrants that have been either built or occupied in Rome.

They have appeared and disappeared in the course of time, sometimes lasting only a few weeks but the main characteristics of migrants who resided in these informal dwellings, was that they used these places only as a *temporary* shelter.

The period of staying in these informal settlements could be longer for someone and shorter for somebody else, however in the span of a few years all the members of migrant communities I have made research with, have slowly changed their conditions and integrated with the wider social context<sup>20</sup>. This integration meant that they progressively gained access to regular housing and work. Life in the shanty town has been therefore, for the members of these groups, only a short, although hard parenthesis<sup>21</sup>.

Only for one group the situation remained completely unaltered since the 1960's, and these were the Roma. The conditions that were temporary even for migrants who arrived only a few years ago, have become permanent for this minority. Their life conditions and level of integration have remained practically unchanged, and the severe forms of social exclusion and marginalisation they are subjected to have no comparison with any other groups.

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<sup>20</sup> In particular for what concerned the case represented for example by Maghrebi and Latin American migrants.

<sup>21</sup> I am referring for example to the Moroccan community I have worked with during the years 1990 – 1992, and to those living in the Casilino 700 encampment (See par. 6.1).

Besides, this situation afflicts not only foreign Roma (Romanians, former Yugoslavian etc.) but also (in different ways) Italian Roma citizens such as the Sinti and the Napulengre Roma<sup>22</sup>.

The many reprimands and condemnation that the European institutions have directed towards Italy because of its treatment of Roma, attests the topicality of this issue, and calls for urgent and immediate action.

However, the actions to be implemented ought not to repeat the chain of errors and mistakes which have characterised all the interventions carried on until now.

In order to do so, there is a need for fresh data, research and reports which, as I will show in the Chapter Two, at present time we do not have.

As social scientists and researchers, it is our duty to provide useful and correct data and informations, but even the most accurate report or the most innovative research could never be a substitute for coherent, well planned and lungimirant policies.

My research is aimed at addressing the following research questions:

Why Roma, of all groups, have been suffering from such severe forms of social exclusion and marginalisation? Which are the factors which have led to the present tragic situation? What are the barriers that prevent Roma's emancipation and integration? Which are the "weak points" in the dialectic among Roma and institutions? Finally, what can be done, to reform a situation that has taken now, the bitter flavour of a silent ethnocide and whose solution cannot be postponed any longer?

These questions provide a framework that can prove extremely useful in order to build new perspectives on the Roma's integration issues and for the individuation of alternative, more efficacious policies.

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<sup>22</sup> Whose presence is documented in Italy since the XIVth century and whose specific case will not be discussed in this work.

### **1.5 Significance of the research**

This study can claim to be important for various reasons. First because it intends to offer a contribution to the study of situation of extreme urban poverties and social exclusion and marginality.

There are no examples of researches conducted in multiethnic shanty towns placed not in third world countries but in a G8 country member like Italy. Actually, apart from studies devoted to Roma's conditions in some eastern European countries there are no other registered cases, in the rest of Europe, of large shanty towns like the Casilino 700 or of the many others which still exists in large numbers in Rome.

Further, one of the aspects of many sociological and anthropological studies on situations of extreme marginality, consist in the fact that often they are limited to a generic or an aimless descriptivism, not much different from the journalistic exposure of a scandal.

This research intends to offer an in-depth insight on the conditions of Roma in Italy and at the same time to propose possible areas and lines of interventions.

My work is referring to the study of a particular spatial reality that of course has envisioned and taken into account all the pertinent studies on social exclusion and urban marginality, however is referring to a very peculiar form of urban poverty.

The Casilino 700 is not a third world bidonville and it bears no resemblance neither with the former Italian precedents.

Casilino 700 is the ghetto of the post-fordist migrations, where Moroccan migrants arrive and settle for a while, but it is also the Roma ethnic ghetto, imposed by institutions on the members of this group.

This study is also important because the recent<sup>23</sup> decisions of the Municipality to not change their approach toward Roma and their habitats. Until year 2009, the project that the Roman Administrators were involved in was supporting the building of thirteen large encampments for the Roma outside the GRA (Grande Raccordo Anulare, a ring which surrounds the city's periphery)<sup>24</sup>.

The last but not least important aspect is related with the practices of action research that allowed me in many occasions to directly involve parts of the encampment population in different activities.

The research can claim to be participated and collaborative since it has engaged in different stages and different ways the Roma as active participants.

One example is the video documentary I have developed with the help of two Roma girls who have been involved in the process of editing and subtitling. During the research, a small group of adolescents also were taught on how to use a camera.

## 1.6 Outline of the thesis

Chapter One of this dissertation is dedicated to the statement of the issue and to a general introduction of the research background. In the following paragraphs will be also introduced the definition of the object of study and the significance of the research. The chapter concludes with a general outline of the thesis and the presentation of my research questions.

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<sup>23</sup> Comune di Roma, Provincia di Roma, Regione Lazio, Prefettura di Roma (2008) **Il Patto per Roma sicura** (Ind Rome's Pact for Lawfulness) Rome 29/07/2008 [online]. Available from: [http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/node/N661730458/0413\\_patto\\_roma\\_sicura\\_29.07.2008.pdf](http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/node/N661730458/0413_patto_roma_sicura_29.07.2008.pdf) [Accessed February 2010].

<sup>24</sup> Comune di Roma, Commissario Straordinario per l'Emergenza Nomadi (2009) **Il Piano Nomadi**. [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed March 2010].

Chapter Two has been devoted to the analysis of the literature review and it presents the theoretical foundations of this work.

Due to the fact that many of the issues touched by my research intersect different areas of knowledge, I have dedicated this section to the introduction of the diverse contributions and materials I have resorted to. The chapter begins with an historical introductive part, for which I have resorted to material produced for the largest part by urbanists and urban historians. This introduction had the purpose of showing how some of the most important characteristics of the city of Rome, (like for example that of economic informality) have been a constant and constituent characteristic of the Roman history and how they have marked the future city's development.

This paragraph is then followed by a review of the sociological past and present production on the themes of urban poverties with special reference to the themes of urban slums and with an analysis of the concepts of ghettos and hyperghettos. The second aspect is the one related to the phenomenon of the shadow economy. This is a very important issue for this work for two reasons: first because of its diffusion in Italy and second because the Roma and Maghrebi communities studied here actively practices this form of economy.

The way in which the Roma question has been handled by national and local governments in Italy, is also bringing the mark of this heritage, and their present day situation could not be properly understood without such an introduction.

The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the materials that have been produced on Roma's conditions by both national and international academics, by institutional agencies like the World Bank or the Council of Europe and by Roma's support NGO's and INGO's. In this section it has been necessary to add a separate part dedicated to the

Italian production on the Roma issue because the situation is so particular that it is very difficult to compare it with that of other European countries described by international authors.

In Chapter Three I present the methodology issues that have characterised my fieldwork research. Here I define my work of research as a specific case study within the action research methodological paradigm, and explain the work done at the encampment as well as the theoretical framework of reference.

The methodological aspects of my research and the issues they have posed will be discussed detailedly, with particular attention to the key concept of “implication”, a constitutive element of any real action research.

Chapter Four, “The City and the Slum”, inspect in detail the aspects treated in the literature review in relation with the peculiarity of the Roman context.

The first section has been devoted to an introduction of the socio-historical background of the city of Rome, in particular for what concern its long tradition of both informal economic occupations and informal housing. As we will see, these elements far from constitute only an historical heritage are instead very actual for the understanding of the present time Roma and migrant’s life conditions.

In paragraphs 4.1 and ff. I explore the development of the city of Rome from the period of Unity (late 1800's) up to the contemporary situation. Typical elements such as the large presence of the informal sector, both in housing and in the job markets, will be here explained and discussed. Without these background informations it will be very hard to understand the so-called “Italian anomaly”.

Paragraph 4.3 deals with another peculiarity that is the one concerning the Italian approach to foreign migrations policies with an introductive section dedicated to the Italian migratory model.

Paragraph 4.3.1 represents an introductory account on the model of the Moroccan migrations to Italy. It contains Quantitative Data and Tables (Presences, permit of staying, sex and age, expulsion data etc.) and offers an outlook on the patterns of migration and on the Italian general policies of managing and controlling the migration phenomenon.

Paragraph 4.3.2 presents a history of the Roma communities in Italy and more specifically in Rome introducing the Roma issue in general, giving an account of their situation in Europe and in Italy. It is preceded by a short historical foreword on Roma that presents this minority which, in spite of the common origin and language, is divided into different groups.

Since the large majority of foreign Roma present in Italy are coming from eastern European countries, there is an introduction on the specific situation in these countries before the fall of Socialist governments and after the great political turmoils of the '90's.

In the conclusive part of this paragraph, I will trace their migration to Italy, the birth of the encampments model, and their progressive shifting into a condition of spatial segregation and socio economic exclusion.

In Chapter Five "The Place", the encampment of Casilino 700 is presented.

This section contains photographs and information about the area's history (it was originally a military Airport) and on its more recent life as an informal Roma and Moroccan encampment.



It also includes a description of the life at the encampment. The images included in this paragraph represent an important visual documentation on informal dwellings, and the full understanding of the life's condition at the encampment, and of the more general situation could have never been properly understood without such a support.

The systematic use of photographs and audiovisual recording has not only served as a means to gather historical documentation of a piece, now disappeared, of urban life and history, but it has also played a key role for what concerns more strictly methodological issues. These aspects have been studied and discussed in-depth in the chapter dedicated to Methodology.

The last part has been dedicated to the outlining of historical, urbanistic and socio-demographic factors concerning the area where the encampment was placed, the neighbourhood of Centocelle. Here are reported excerpts of interviews recorded by me and administered to some of the neighbourhood inhabitants and their views and personal evaluations on the issue of Roma and migrants.

Chapter Six presents the people living at the Casilino 700 encampment: the Roma and the small Moroccan community that settled there after being evicted from their original shanty town and had been "hosted" by the Roma who were already living in Casilino 700. As I have hinted before, this community was formed by some of the survivors of another shanty town, which existed not very far from the Casilino 700 area and which had been destroyed in an arson in the summer of 1992. The title "The Moroccan Atoll" refers to the fact that from a spatial point of view, this community was placed at the centre of the Roma encampment, built circularly so that it gave to the observer the impression of being a small island, but also because in spite of the physical vicinity, the relationship between the two groups have always been very limited.

Paragraph 6.1 “From Oran to Centocelle<sup>25</sup>”, enters into the details of this migration flow, and it is an ethnographic account of the history and lives of the Moroccan community that was living hosted by the Roma in the Casilino 700 encampment.

The inhabitants of this smaller dwelling, were all men who had travelled alone, often following the migratory trail already traced by relatives or friends, and for the largest part occupied either in ambulant trade or in unqualified temporary jobs (porters, builders etc.).

Paragraph 6.2 offers socio-demographic quantitative data on the Xoraxanè Roma that were living at the encampment. These data have been gathered in three different occasions and with each new revelation I proceed to integrate the old ones. I have had access to the official census conducted by the Urban Police and my daily fieldwork has allowed me to register an accurate account of the presences. Other data have been gathered in the occasion of the census of Bosnian refugees at the encampment, requested by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the CENSIS<sup>26</sup>. This paragraph also contains important information regarding the housing and working situation of this group right before the Yugoslavian war of the ‘90’s, and how their situation changed abruptly following the tragic events of the war.

Chapter Seven enters into the real core of this dissertation because it is dedicated to the analysis of institutional and private sectors interventions and therefore, to the social policies enacted toward this minority.

After a brief introduction and a first paragraph dedicated to the explanation of the structure and the role of the third sector in Italy, the chapter takes into account the

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<sup>25</sup> Oran is the Libyan port from where African immigrants, among which many are Moroccans, depart to reach Italy. Centocelle, is the Roman neighbourhood where the bidonville was located.

<sup>26</sup> CENSIS (Centro Studi Economici e Sociali), a very important Italian private research institute.

various NGO's interventions which, in different sectors, have taken place at the Casilino 700 encampment.

The work of the NGO's constitutes an important issue for any work dealing on migrants, Roma and other "weak categories", especially in a country like Italy, where the welfare system is often delegated to private bodies. Their role and work are important and central for the assessment of policy making and in order to produce an evaluation of the corpus of interventions that during these last twenty years have been dedicated to Roma.

Paragraphs 7.3 to 7.3.3 are dedicated to general interventions of various kinds (health, refugee protection etc.), while paragraphs 7.4 and ff. are dedicated to the detailed analysis of the practices concerning the schooling of the Casilino 700 Roma children. Included, there are data on the schooling projects and interviews with teachers, social assistants and other social workers that dealt with the Roma.

Chapter Eight investigates the elements of anomie like the phenomena of deviance and drug addiction which are menacing in particular the young Roma adolescents. In the last part, are described the events happened during the last year of the encampment's life and the relocation in the new encampment of via Salviati 2.

Paragraphs from 8.1 to 8.2.2 are dedicated in particular to the study of these forms of social anomie and to an analysis of the Italian juvenile penal system with special attention to foreigners and Roma.

Deviant and criminal activities constitutes one of the possible paths for both Roma and migrants who are often subjected to what De Angelis defined as "the malignant inclusion" (De Angelis, 2009, p.98). The life conditions in the Roman encampments are dramatic and adolescents are often at risk of drug addiction, especially for what concern

the use of heavy drugs such as cocaine and heroin. These phenomena were totally unknown by Roma parents before their arrival to Italy, and this makes more difficult the implementation of prevention policies.

Paragraph 8.3 is dedicated to the analysis of the role and the behaviour of control institutions such as the Italian and the Municipal Police.

Paragraph 8.4 describes the events occurred during the last year of the encampment's existence, including the definitive eviction and destruction.

The chronicle of these events have not been reported for mere historical or documentarian reasons, but because their study can become an *analyser*; i.e. a tool and an indicator to be used for the analysis of the institutions behaviour when dealing with emergencies, and on the effectiveness and pertinence of statutory bodies interventions.

Chapter Nine begins with giving an account of the present day situation of the former inhabitants of Casilino 700 and of the new Municipality policies directed toward them.

I will use these recent events as an introduction for other proposals of interventions, based on the social capital of the group according to my research work.

Chapter Ten reports the conclusions to my work. This last part includes a summary view on the empirical materials which have been the basis for the building of this research, an account of the theoretical importance of my work, and it ends with an overview of the possible recommendations and practical actions to be undertaken by local and national institutions in order to create real occasions for Roma people to have access to the all of the possibilities offered by Italian society.

As a Social Anthropologist, I have always tried, during my life, to produce positive, useful tool for social interventions. For this reason I have concluded my work with a list

of possible practical interventions that in my opinion should be implemented in order to support the process of empowerment and integration of this neglected community.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction to the literature review

The bibliography used for this work, is drawn from sources coming from very different areas of research.

To begin with, there is an historical part dedicated to the history of both housing and economic informality in the city of Rome. This has been necessary because it is not possible to understand fully a situation like the Roman one without a diachronic analysis that allows the reader (and in particular the non Italian reader) to become familiar and to understand the *humus*, and the social and historical conditions and precedents that decades later would have created the conditions for the existence of places like Casilino 700.

In this section of the work I have mostly used the works produced by important urbanists and contemporary historians like Insolera (2001, 2002a, 2002b), Seronde Babonaux (1983), Cederna (1979), Agnew (1995) and Vidotto (2001), whose researches have investigated in-depth the origins of the socio urbanistic Roman context and its further developments.

When seen in the light of this general historical background, the case of the Casilino 700 encampment ceases to be only one of the many micro-sociological case studies, to become instead on one hand the occasion for the observation and the analysis of many themes of socio anthropological interests: migrations, ethnic relations, social exclusion,

urban poverty and the ghetto, and on the other hand, a way to examine in detail also the social policies enacted by institutions, the practices of integration and the dynamics of social change which took place in the specificity of the Italian context.

As far as more strictly ethnographic interest is concerned regarding the encampment's inhabitants, it must be noted that while for a topic like that of other Moroccan migrations abroad and in particular to Italy, there does exist a huge amount of literature, the situation is totally different for what concerns the studies on Roma

In this case in fact, as it will be reported more specifically further on in this paragraph, there is a great mass of publications dedicated to the classical themes of cultural anthropologists (myths, religion, kinship etc.) and linguists, but there is also a general absence of works dedicated to the analysis of the contemporary aspects and to the themes of social and cultural change. Further, the production on these themes and on that of social policies, are often incomparable, due to the peculiarity of the Italian situation when compared with that of any other European country.

To this lack of studies on Roma citizenship rights and integration, must be added the objective difficulty to do research on a specific group on which, either because Italy does not collect statistical data on people's ethnic backgrounds, or because the group has never been recognised as a cultural minority, there are no official and reliable data. This lack of data applies even to very common issues such as the number of residents.

The difficulty in finding bibliographical references lies also in the fact that the case represented by Italy has assumed a very specific aspect since the encampments where Roma are forced to live have been imposed by institutions, and this represents a case which has no comparison elsewhere.

For this reason a large part of the data and documents that I have consulted for the compilation of this research are those produced by local governments such as the Municipality of Rome, the Lazio Region and the Province of Rome local governments.

Local governments are the most pertinent because Italy does not have any national law regarding specifically Roma and Sinti as a distinct minority, therefore any state or NGO activity directed toward them is organised on local basis.

The study of this corpus of local laws, ordinances, public bids and other materials dedicated to the Roma group are important sources of information if we intend to analyse the institutional behaviour and the social policies enacted toward this community, and they constitute a good indicator of the attitudes toward the Roma.

## **2.2 Ghettoes, slums and hyperghettoes**

A research project like mine, conducted in an urban shanty town, could not be properly developed and structured without making reference to the past and more recent works on the theme of urban poverties and ghettos.

There is a long historical sociological tradition of studies devoted to the study of situations of marginality and extreme urban poverty; I will refer here to a series of authors that in different ways have all been useful for my research which deals with the study of a slum, the ghetto *par excellence*.

Among the first to study urban poors and their living conditions, we must quote historical works such as Engels's studies on the English working classes, and the works of important social reformers such as Henry Mayhew (1861), Charles Booth (1889) and



Jacob Riis (1890), whose works provide still today an important source for the social historian and the urban sociologist<sup>1</sup>.

To this documentation we must add the material constituted by the numerous state reports on the conditions of the lower urban classes<sup>2</sup> produced both in the United States and in Britain.

These earlier studies on classic poverties are dedicated to the study of the living conditions of the working classes, and although the situation described can be undoubtedly described as urban poverty, they were not living in slums, and, opposite to the modern slum dwellers, they were included at some level in the wider society at least as workers.

After these pioneristic studies, the first systematic and sociological approach to the study on urban poverty begun with the studies produced by the scholars of the Chicago school under the direction of Robert Park.

Park, who can be described as the founder of the modern urban sociology, is at the core of a project which remains unrivalled for both scope and commitment.

Thanks to the works produced by the Chicago school, and to Park's sensitivity toward the ethnographic approach, these groups of scholars have produced in-depth researches on metropolitan micro areas and groups, that the mainstream quantitative sociological approach would have failed to report.

The group pursued the central theme concerning the interpretation of the social transformation connected with mass urbanisation and with the city itself.

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<sup>1</sup> In particular the work of Riis, J. (1890) **How The Other Half Live: Studies in the Tenements of New York**, who, as a photographer, left us an important amount of images on the New York slums and immigrant's life.

<sup>2</sup> See for example: Wright, C. Seventh Special Report, United States Commissioner for Labor (1894) **The Slums of Great Cities**, and the many reports from the British Royal Commission.

Park was interested in issues such as social inequality, race relations and metropolitan life and, together with Ernest Burgess was one of the first sociologists to concentrate his studies on the analysis of the growing multiethnic societies, developing a theory of assimilation<sup>3</sup>.

These works are extremely important both for their object of study and for the methodology used. They were the first to study specifically the poverty of migrants which were present at that time in Chicago in large numbers. An example is that of a qualitative study such as “The Polish Peasant” (1996), which for topic and methodology well represents the research style inaugurated by the members of this school.

The production of this school is vast, and it ranges from microsociological studies conducted with ethnographic sensibility such as the ones of Foote Whyte (1993), Shaw (1976) and Thrasher (1963) on criminal individuals, groups and gangs, to the studies of Johnson (1930) and Frazier (1949) on black population, to Wirth’s study of the Jewish ghetto (1968). The interest toward the migrant poverty in some cases has even been directed to poor migrants without territory, like in the case of the Anderson’s research on “The Hobo” (1993).

More specifically on the theme of slums, the scholars from this school produced works like the one written by H. W. Zorbaugh (1976) which concerned the study of a particular area in light of the relations existing between the community social structure and the spatial and geographical elements. The study was conducted in the Chicago rich areas (the gold Coast) and in the contiguous slums.

This tradition of interest in urban marginality, was continued later by other scholars like Duncan Suttles (1968, 1972). Suttles studied the standard behaviour of slum residents as

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<sup>3</sup> The so called Race Relations Cycle (Park and Burgess, 1986).

opposed to that of the “straight” society in light of the ecological perspectives indicated by Park (1999).

One of these examples is the notion of *natural area*, in which also the ghetto was included. According to Wirth, ‘... ghettoization was a manifestation of human nature, virtually coterminous with the history of migration’ (Wacquant, 2004, p. 3)<sup>4</sup>.

The corpus of studies produced by the Chicago schools continues to fascinate sociology students and modern readers, although their importance declined when the school succumbed to other approaches of completely different kind, like the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons, whose quantitative approach prevailed over the American sociological panorama.

Also in Europe there exists a tradition of sociological and anthropological researches and studies devoted to the analysis of the slums and of the social exclusion.

The shanty towns, *baraccopoli*, *bairros de lata* or *bidonvilles* have existed in many European countries in forms which were previously unknown.

They have hosted different kinds of inhabitants, representing the many aspects of migration: citizens from former colonial countries (Algerians and Moroccans in France), migrant labour force coming from abroad (Portuguese, Spanish, Italians), nationals displaced following flows of internal migration (as in the case of Italy with the southern Italians migration toward the more industrialised north) or, like in the specific case represented by Rome, inhabitants evicted from their former houses after a violent process of class expulsion and urbanistic reorganisation.

Starting from the 40’s and for all the ‘70’s there has been a vast production of ethnographies, essays and researches conducted in Italian (mostly Roman) and French

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<sup>4</sup> See Wacquant’s critic of the interpretation of the ghetto as a natural area (Wacquant, 2004).

bidonvilles. I will only hint here to this production because due to the pertinence they have with my research topic and the specific case described in this thesis, they will be discussed more detailedly in Chapter Four.

The Italian studies on urban poverty have been for the larger part dedicated to the analysis of autoctone contexts, where the local forms of strong urban poverties were constituted by internal migrants. These subjects were originally either farmers or peasants, who after the Second World War fled in large numbers from the misery of the countryside to work in the northern Italy factories. The inhabitants of these former bidonvilles were all at least somehow included in the wider society, for example through their job occupations.

All the historical examples of Roman bidonvilles, have gradually disappeared as their inhabitants got slowly integrated by mean of inclusive social policies such as the one related with popular housing.

But the slums and bidonvilles have not disappeared, quite the contrary in fact, they have grown and enlarged, thus becoming a distinctive feature of the urbanisation, especially in third world countries. Two important Reports from the United Nations (UN Human Settlement Programme, 2003; UN Habitat, 2003) estimated that in 2001 there were 921 million people living in slums and that this number will rise over the billion in the year 2005.

Apart from the international agencies reports, also many sociologists have dealt with this issue producing very interesting works on this particular phenomenon like the analysis produced by Z. Bauman, M. Davis and L. Wacquant.

All, in different forms, have studied the socio economic transformations which have led to present day situation. Their contributions have been of significant importance for my

work, supporting me with a general theoretical framework which has been very useful for the construction of contemporary analytical interpretations of today's social exclusion and extreme urban poverties.

In particular Bauman has devoted his work to the study of the postmodern condition and on how it has changed and affected the life of individuals, indicating how this influence, through globalisation, became a common destiny for the entire world population.

Among his numerous publications a particular attention should be drawn to his book "Wasted Lives. Modernity and its Outcasts" (2004, It. Ed. 2007), whose insights and contents have been particularly important to my research because it is dedicated to the themes of social exclusion and social dumping.

This essay is focused on the concept of "waste" as one of the prominent products of our era. The author establishes an analogy among the material wastes produced during the process of production and consumption, and the human wastes born from historical processes of social expulsion.

Bauman depicts a situation in which the welfare state protection systems and the limitations imposed on market economic activities have been dramatically eroded or destroyed. This process led us to the present day situation, where the "exceeding" and weakest individuals and groups, are left alone to cope with the ongoing crisis. These "human wastes", are relegated, from the habitat point of view, in marginalised areas, to the borders of civilization (Bauman, 2007, pp.79-116).

This destituted population, expelled from the job market competition, constitutes a "wasted" humanity whose possibility of integration or reintegration is close to zero (Bauman, 2007, p. 66).

Another important author who dealt with these themes and specifically with the phenomenon of the slums is Mike Davis.

Davis' researches have mostly focused on the analysis of the macroscopic trends ongoing in the world and on the informal dwellings of the third world megalopolis, stating that since the 70's, the world slum population has risen beyond urbanisation in itself (Davis, 2006, p. 23).

These third world slums, inhabited by a large informal urban proletariat whose specificities and peculiarities represents a challenge for international agencies and institutions that neither Marxists, nor neo-liberal classics have been able to foresee.

Like Bauman, also Davis explains and interprets the growth of slums in the entire world as a specific process of 'late capitalistic humanity screening' (Davis, 2006, p.177).

The author concludes his work with a question: in which way, these millions of desperate human beings will express their resistance and rebellion to the life conditions into which they are relegated? Whether they will choose political, religious, or communitarian forms of resistances, the author foresees securitarian and repressive solutions, in order to ensure long life to the slums as places of social dumping for an exceeding portion of humanity (Davis, 2006, pp.179-183).

Even more stimulating and pertinent for my research have been the contributions offered by French sociologist Loïc Wacquant.

While the studies of both Davis and Bauman quoted before were based mostly on the study of the situation in Third World countries, Wacquant's writings are based on the researches he conducted in the American black ghettos and in the French *banlieue*, and this is one of the reasons for which his analysis have been so useful for this dissertation.

His theoretical approaches have been strongly influenced by Bourdieu's theories of whom Wacquant was a student. His writings are particularly important for the analytical contribution they had offered to the sociological concept of ghetto, defined by Wacquant as *hyperghetto*, and for his studies on *advanced social marginality*<sup>5</sup>.

He distinguishes six distinctive features in order to define the concept of advanced marginality: 'growing internal heterogeneity and desocialisation of labour, functional disconnection of neighbourhood conditions from macro-economic trends, territorial fixation and stigmatization, spatial alienation and dissolution of place, loss of a viable hinterland, symbolic fragmentation of marginalised productions' (Wacquant 1996, pp. 124-128).

Deepening further his analysis of the concept of ghetto, W. registers also that:

'... For a ghetto to emerge, spatial confinement must, first, be imposed and all-encompassing and, second, it must be overlaid with a distinct and duplicative set of institutions enabling the group thus cloistered to reproduce itself within its assigned perimeter ...' (Wacquant, 2004, p. 4).

Further extending his investigation to the symbolic aspects of the ghetto and in particular of his role as a "collective identity machine" based on separatedness.

This effect is reinforced and obtained by mean of two elements:

'... First, the ghetto sharpens the boundary between the outcast category and the surrounding population by deepening the cultural chasm between them (...). Second, the ghetto is a cultural combustion engine that melts divisions among the confined group and fuel its collective pride even as it entrenches the stigma that hovers over it' (Wacquant, 2004, p. 5).

Today's ghettos are hyperghettos because 'joblessness and social exclusion, having reached dramatic proportions, have triggered a process of hyperghettoization' (Wacquant, 1989, p. 3), and '... The result was a new urban form that I call

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<sup>5</sup> Wacquant's use of the term 'advanced' refers to the fact that this marginality is, to use his words, 'ahead of us' (Wacquant, 1996, p.123).

hyperghetto, characterised by double relegation on the basis of race and class and reinforced by a state policy of welfare withdrawal and urban abandonment' (Wacquant, 2008, p.114).

This withdrawal and gradual erosion of the welfare state as a mechanism of social inclusion, and which Wacquant defines as *negative social capital*, has been replaced by policies of surveillance, in order to control and confine a "problematic" sector of the population. Thus offering a security oriented response to social problems.

Wacquant's *hyperghetto* is a place where the possibility of social inclusion and emancipation are limited not only by class and structural factors, but also by the lack of adequate amounts of social capital to resort to.

The concept of social capital has been introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, and it consists in the '... sum total of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual (or a group) by virtue of being enmeshed in a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition-or, in other words, to membership in a group' (Wacquant, 1998, p. 27).

Bourdieu distinguishes among the different existing forms of capital: there is an economic, cultural, social and a symbolic capital.

According to Bourdieu and Wacquant, the position of an individual in the social space, is determined by the amount and the quality of the different kinds of capital (formal and informal) to which he can resort to. Informal types of social capital for example include the 'resourceful social ties based on interpersonal networks of exchange, trust and obligations', and 'formal social capital, made up of ties ... anchored in formal organisations to which one participates as a member, client or ward ...' (Wacquant, 1998, p. 28).



The capital, either economic, cultural or social, can also be negative. This does not only determine his lack, but also his eventual efficacy or inefficacy to the purposes of emancipation and social mobility.

Due to the class stratification in societies, what is considered as positive cultural capital in one determined *milieu*, can assume a negative value when expressed in other contexts.

One example of this is offered by Wacquant in the case for example of the slang spoken by black Americans residing in poverty areas. Used in its original social and cultural context, it is considered “cool” and is a mean of social integration in the local context, but if it is used in dominant social contexts becomes an element of negative social labelling, discrimination and stigma.

It is evident how this whole corpus of concepts relative to the diverse kinds of capital becomes extremely important and a key factor of analysis, for those who studies and works in contexts of extreme social poverties.

The contributions offered by these last authors constitutes an excellent theoretical frame and a good toolkit for the study and the assessment of cases like the one presented in this thesis, because the multiethnic slum object of this study can be considered as a perfect example of the hyperghetto and of the advanced social marginality theorised by Wacquant.

### **2.3 Economic informality**

Another important topic pertinent to my research is the one related with the aspects of economic informality, a range of activities in which both the Moroccans and the Roma of the Casilino 700 encampment were involved.

Although this study does not intend to confront with this issue in detail, the peculiarity of this dissertation's topic and the geographical area where the research took place, (i.e. Rome), makes it necessary to offer some hints on this peculiar national characteristic.

In this regard the sources I have used pertained basically to two aspects of this phenomenon. The first is the one that concern the general Italian situation because Italy, together with Greece, is the only European country where there is a massive presence of the so called shadow economy<sup>6</sup>, while the second aspect of economic informality is instead the one that specifically pertains to the Roma small economical niches.

The specificity of the Italian job market and the large presence of the shadow economy is such a relevant issue that it has gained also the attention of international agencies like the World Bank and the OSCE, which have studied in-depth this phenomenon<sup>7</sup>.

This background element is of paramount importance for any analysis on disadvantaged or marginalised groups in Italy because it affects and imprints their whole process of integration, although in different ways.

For example the Moroccan community experimented with the kind of informality reserved to the workers of the post-fordist era. It is a modern informality produced by the needs of a market which has become always more precarious and fluid and where informality, as I have showed in the data presented in Chapter Four, is a completely structural element of our national economic system, especially for what concern migrant labour force.

On the other hand, the corpus of the small informal economic activities practiced by Roma are of a different kind and have more to do with the small self enterprises on familiar basis or with the category of handicraft.

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<sup>6</sup> *Shadow economy* is a definition which comprehends black, informal and illegal jobs.

<sup>7</sup> See details in par.4.3.

For the analysis of Roma commerces and small enterprises, have been much more useful the contributions offered to the debate on informal economies by the French economist and sociologist Serge Latouche.

Latouche has studied the African informal economic systems and his works have been focused on the study of these alternative forms of economy.

In his views informality represents a ‘... manifestation of crisis of western values ...’ (Latouche, 1993, p.105) and it ‘... comprehends strategies of global answers to the challenges posed by life to urban populations displaced and eradicated, divided among the lost traditions and the impossible modernity ...’ (Latouche, 1993, p. 107)<sup>8</sup>.

For this author, the practices of informality are considered as creative answers and as an alternative to the capitalistic system, and they constitute an important resource for the survival of entire groups, especially in third world countries.

Further deepening his theories, Latouche (1997, p. 89) affirms that: ‘In the informal ... the economic is not autonomous .... It is dissolved, embedded in the social, in particular in the complex networks which structures these peripheries ...’.

And it is just in this embeddedness of the economic and of the social aspect that Latouche’s definition of this ‘neoclanic *oikonomia*’ (Latouche, 1997, p.189) becomes an important tool for the study of Roma’s economical niches in Rome.

Although Latouche’s theorisations sometimes romanticizes too much the world of informality, yet the importance of his contributions remains unaltered, especially for the study of a situation like that of Roma, whose inclusion in the labor market has always took place within this informal frame.

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<sup>8</sup> All quotes from Latouche’s books have been translated by me. The page numbers are referred to the Italian editions.

However, whether the economic activities practiced are in the field of dependant labour, like in the case of the Moroccans, or in that of self employment, yet they all are framed into this geographical context and all have to cope with this socio-economic background.

## **2.4 Studies on Romani culture: folkloric, historic and philological approaches**

Romani groups with all its variants, represent one of the oldest historical linguistic minorities in Europe. Due to the fact that a large part of this research is dedicated specifically to Roma, it has been necessary to refer also to the vast corpus of literature on this subject.

Academic and scientific literature on Roma groups is vast and differentiated. Basically, the works produced insofar can be divided into two main categories: the first one is composed by books and essays written by pure academics (anthropologists, sociologists, linguists etc.), while the second has been for the large part produced by statutory bodies, international agencies and NGO's, sometimes, but not very often<sup>9</sup>, with the help of academics.

Then a further differentiation exists among the first group. One sector of this production deals with classical anthropological themes such as the study of the systems of kinship and clanship, or of the religious and symbolic aspects of the Romani culture. Among this group are important scholars such as Vaux de Foletier (1990) and Cozannet (1975, 1990) who, although they do not have an anthropological background both have nonetheless contributed to the diffusion of knowledge concerning Romani history and cultures.

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<sup>9</sup> At least for what concern Italy.

The approach of these authors is common to that of many ethnologically styled classic studies of the past, presenting the multifaceted Romani world according to a schematic and, most important, essentialistic vision<sup>10</sup>.

Although they can undoubtedly be quite useful for a first approach to this world or for background purposes, yet their utility as tools to investigate the Roma's present day situation is rather more limited.

The descriptive model adopted by these authors is very generic and unifies all the Roma in one large category that does not take into any account the many differences existing among Roma groups. Further, these contributions do not discuss any of the contemporary Roma issues such as that of health, housing conditions, employment or social exclusion, therefore their usefulness for a research like mine has been very limited.

Among these authors which ought also to be remembered are the contributions produced by international associations such as the Gypsy Lore Society, whose works have played a very important role in the diffusion of studies on Romani groups by mean of publication of studies and of a Learned Journal in print since 1888<sup>11</sup>.

This institution publishes every year the proceedings of their annual meetings, with essays produced by international authors thus constituting a very important resource for the study of Romani culture.

One of their more recent publication, "Ethnic Identities and Dynamic Perspective" (2002), contains anthropological, folkloric and linguistic contributions, but in spite of the title, in the quoted essay there was not one single article dedicated to the theme of Roma and social and cultural change, or on the radical changes who are investing the

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<sup>10</sup> It must be noted though, that both authors have not got an anthropological or ethnographic background.

<sup>11</sup> The Gypsy Lore Society was founded in 1888 in Great Britain and it is an international association of people interested in Gypsy and Travellers studies.

many sectors of the Romani archipelagus. These authors have concentrated mostly on the strictly cultural domain, sometimes with an historical perspective, but the main keywords of my work are that of social exclusion, integration and social policies; in short, the traditional themes of the social anthropologist.

I was not interested in the study of the symbolic or historical aspects of Roma culture, although these fields of study have a great importance in the preservation of Romani cultural heritage. I wanted to investigate the reasons and the factors which have pushed this group of people, often in Italy during centuries or decades, at the border of our society, stigmatised and marginalised. I intended to discover the weak points existing in the few initiatives directed towards their integration like that of the schooling of Roma children. Finally, I wanted to develop practical hypothesis of intervention that could be useful to rethink the intervention done up to date, and to implement new alternative ways.

Therefore I have concentrated my attention to scholars who have devoted themselves to the study of Roma groups and their integration processes in contemporary Europe.

#### **2.4.1 From historical interests to the studies on contemporary Roma world**

Apart from the traditional works of the authors that refers to the Gypsy Lore Society, there are also numerous contributions which have been dedicated to the study of the contemporary Roma world.

Of great interest in this sense, have been the recent essays of important international scholars such as Thomas Acton.

Acton worked extensively for decades on Roma groups' related issues, with particular attention to the case of the English Travellers. His interests ranging from human rights, to education and policies toward Roma and to Roma political issues.

That of Roma's political activism and participation is an interesting aspect that is assuming always a more crucial role because '... the world's Romani population is increasingly becoming part of a process of political mobilisation, manifest through Europe. [And that] Cultural affirmation is a part of such a process. ...' (Gheorghe and Acton, 2001, p. 55).

This cultural affirmation could, according to Acton, be supported for example by the valorisation of bilingualism as a resource rather than a handicap. In a 2000 publication, the author strongly criticised the British government policies aimed at raising educational standards for ethnic minorities's children, as expressed in the 2000 OFSTED<sup>12</sup> report.

The report followed the government decision to put an end to the funding dedicated to the teaching of ethnic minorities' languages while creating a standard fund with the purpose of devoting more efforts to the acquisition of a better proficiency in the English language.

Acton opposes these views which are instead seen as discriminatory since they end to label ethnic minorities' children as underachievers<sup>13</sup>.

This ongoing debate is an indicator of the fact that discriminatory issues are present also in countries like the United Kingdom, homeland of communitarism, but it also reveals

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<sup>12</sup> OFSTED (2000) **Educational Inequality, Mapping Race, Class and Gender** [online]. Available from: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Inclusion/Minority-ethnic-children/Educational-inequality-mapping-race-class-and-gender>. [Accessed February 2010].

<sup>13</sup> See press report: University of Greenwich (2000) **Press Release** [online]. Available from: <http://w3.greenwich.ac.uk/pr/releasearchive/489.htm> [Accessed October 2000].

the backwardness and incomparability of the Italian situation with that of other European countries. Bilingualism in Italy is granted in schools only to the officially recognised linguistic minority, in which Roma and Sinti have not been included<sup>14</sup>.

Another prominent figure in the panorama of the Romani studies is that of Jean Pierre Liégeois, professor at the University of Paris V “La Sorbonne” and founder of the *Centre de recherches tsiganes*. His contributions have dealt with issues such as social inclusion and the schooling processes and since the ‘90’s he has been involved in numerous collaborations with the Council of Europe and with the Commission of European Communities for questions of relevance for Roma communities.

The works of these authors, although not used directly in the production of this dissertation, have constituted a very good orientation and a starting point for the theoretical knowledge of Romani cultures and their situation in other geographical contexts.

Being a dissertation based on an Italian – Roman field research, but submitted to a British University like that of Birmingham, I have of course felt the need for a comparative part among the two nations, but unfortunately, that has not been possible for two main reasons.

First, British authors have dealt with Romani issues basing their researches on the analysis of the Roma situation in two main areas: that of the Great Britain’s Travellers or that of central and eastern European countries. Studies and reports on Traveller issues constitute an extensive corpus of documentation, but this material has not been used in the compilation of this dissertation because the Traveller situation is much more similar to that of the Italian Sinti than that of Roma. Typically nomadic related issues such as

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<sup>14</sup> Even if they were included the law would concern only national minorities, thus excluding for example all the Roma from former Yugoslavia.



the ones concerning for example the management of Camping sites, mobile schools etc. do not pertain to cases like that of the Roma *Xoraxanè* with whom I have been working. Nonetheless, among the British authors I have resorted to for my research, must be remembered the group of scholars whose works have been based on Roma groups studied in eastern European Countries. For example the study conducted by Bancroft on Czech Roma (Bancroft, 2001) or the extensive works of Will Guy on Roma of Central and eastern Europe (Guy, 2001) and the work of D. M. Crowe on the Roma of eastern Europe and Russia (Crowe, 1996).

All these materials were much too advanced when compared with the Roman situation I was dealing with. For what concern the Roma question, Italy's situation, apart from few extraordinary examples, is generally so different compared to that of northern European nations that this disparity of conditions makes the comparison either impossible or useless<sup>15</sup>.

Instead, this interesting and precious *corpus* of practices, projects, recommendations and interventions, will be used and analysed as a tool, a handbook and a guide through other nation's approaches to this tragic inequality issue, constituting an archive of good practices.

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<sup>15</sup> Roma are the group with the lowest level of integration considered under indicators such as access to study, to work, and to housing (See also "Laeken indicators"). Actually the Roma that I have been working with were all foreigners. Not a single Roma in Rome has ever been enrolled into Universities. In 2009 I have been invited to give a lecture on the Italian situation to the Roma Summer School in Sopron (HU) and to this course, organised by EUMP Livia Jàròka, have participated 30 Roma students already graduated in Political Sciences and Law. These results in Italy are yet to come. These aspects of failed integration will be discussed further in Chapter Eight and Nine.

#### **2.4.2 Roma's socio-economic conditions and social policies analysis: Reports from international agencies and NGO's**

Another important sector of my bibliographic resources on Roma have been the studies produced by both institutional international agencies and NGO's.

These materials were conceived in the forms of reports and surveys on problematic issues of the contemporary Roma society on themes like health, women conditions, education, housing, human rights etc. They represent a very useful corpus of material for a scholar interested also in the delineation of possible practices of intervention.

Scholars, social workers and member of the institutions who deal with the problematic of the Romani world, even in the diversity of the theoretical and political approach all agree in affirming that the Roma situation in Europe is dramatic. Often, like in the Italian case, so tragic, to be subjected to international stigma and condemnations (Council of Europe, 2002, 2006).

Legal invisibility, precarious and unhealthy housing condition, intermittent access to income, marginality and social and economic exclusion are themes that we all are forced to confront with for decades (Liégeois, 1987, 1988a, 1998b; O'Nions, 1995; Council of Europe, 2006).

The studies and reports produced to date by international agencies such as the World Bank, the OSCE and the EU all agree that the Roma situation is, amongst minorities, one of the most dramatic. Although their presence in European countries has been historically documented for centuries, their access to citizenship rights is still very far from being completed. In numerous countries they are subjected to living conditions that have no equal for any other minority in Europe (Ringold, Orenstein and Wilkens, 2003).

Other important contributions have come from the materials produced by other organisations agencies such as the Council of Europe and through INGO's such as the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) and many others.

These agencies have produced several surveys and specific country reports on Roma's integration, health, schooling, political representation etc. that have constituted the most valuable tools for someone like me that was interested in social exclusion and social policies of integration.

In particular the ERRC produces and publishes on his website numerous reports and surveys concerning Roma situation state by state, including Italy, and their archives contain a large documentation on different topics which is very useful for both scholars and neophytes who wants to understand Romani issues more thoroughly.

## **2.5 Romani studies in Italy**

As I have said earlier about the incomparability of for example the British and Italian situation, and due to the fact that the Italian case was so peculiar, is why a large part of my bibliography has been comprised of Italian authors.

As far as Italian academics and scholars are concerned, there is a certain difficulty in finding useful material on the aspects I have decided to investigate. It must also be said that the social scientist working on Roma has very few possibilities of having support or to succeed in arising any interest inside the Academy. I remember vividly an episode which occurred to me a few months after my graduation. I went to speak to the Department Director of the Faculty of Education Sciences to present my work on Roma (at that time I had worked with them for 6 years) and when he heard that I had written

my BA dissertation on Roma he asked if I had somehow discovered ‘Why do they steal so much?’. I report this episode to make the foreign reader understand that in Italy if you work on Roma as an academic you are considered in the most benign case as a dropout, when not a driftwood from the past, who decided to be secluded from the most “fashionable” areas of social sciences.

However, the list of Italian authors is pretty long, but it must be noted that few are the pure academics. One of the most renowned is Leonardo Piasere, an anthropologist, but they are mostly coming from different professional sectors (school teachers, psychologists, pedagogists, etc.).

Among the Italian Romani scholars, many have catalogued the danger of a crisis, carried by “modernity”, which crashed against the Roma world in terms of identity loss, describing them as a culture in great risk of cultural survival (Karpati, 1995; Severino, 1996).

Others instead refuse this thesis basing their confidence on the Roma's historical adaptive resources (Piasere, 2002, 2003, 2004).

The academic attention toward this group in Italy has concentrated mostly on more strictly anthropological aspects like that of kinship or social structure (Piasere, 1991; Zatta, 1986) or on the schooling of Roma children, with special attention to the pedagogical aspects like the works of Severino and Amadei (Severino, 1996; Amadei, 1996). An important exception among the Italian production on Romani issues is the one constituted by the researchers Nando Sigona and Tommaso Vitale. These two authors have dedicated their interest to the study of the contemporary situation of both Roma and Sinti in Italy. Sigona devoted particular attention to the themes of citizenship (Sigona, 2006), to that of Roma migration and Roma refugees (Sigona, 2005, 2009) and

on the problem of the encampments (Sigona and Bravi, 2007). On the other hand Vitale also studied the issue of Roma citizenship's rights, giving attention to the analysis of general governance issues and more detailedly on the social policies enacted by institutions especially concerning the Roma habitat and the encampments (Vitale, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). The works of these two researchers have been exceptionally useful for my work due to the similarity of the approach and because of our common interest in Roma's contemporary situation.

A sector apart is that constituted by the publications of non academics, notably associations and NGO's who deals with Roma. Among these publications, the most interesting work is certainly the volume edited by Brunello (1996) on Roma's life condition in Italy. The book is composed by short monographies dedicated to the analysis of local policies toward Roma encampments in the various Italian regions. However, apart from this example, the literature production of these organizations (at least for what concern the Lazio region) has been either nonexistent, or concentrated mainly on cultural and folkloric aspects<sup>16</sup>.

In spite of the fact that these organisations are the ones which materially deals everyday with the integration processes, like for example that of the schooling of Roma children, and therefore they ought to be the ones more able to furnish reliable data on this intervention, there is still a void of documentation that should be filled<sup>17</sup>.

If reports and other materials on the different projects they are entrusted of, have ever been produced, these remains up to date unknown and undischarged to the large public, and as far as we know, probably only submitted to the financing institution.

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<sup>16</sup> See for example: Mancini, V. (2007) **Cheja Chelen, Ragazze che ballano**. Roma: Sensibili alle Foglie. A book written by one of the ARCI social workers working in the Roma Monte Mario encampment about her experience with Roma women and the Roma Dance Group "Cheja Chelen".

<sup>17</sup> From the year 2000 to 2009 ARCI, CDS, Ermes have regularly won the public bids for the schooling of Roma children in Rome.

There are also many contributions from the historical Italian Foundation for Roma, the Opera Nomadi (1993a, 1993b, 1996 etc.) which has a long history of presence and work in the Roma encampments in Italy, but the materials and data produced up to date do not constitute a reliable source for scholars, because of the scarce systematicity and their lack of an adequate theoretical and methodological frame.

### **2.5.1 The review “Lacio Drom” and the *Centro Studi Zingari***

An exception in the Italian landscape of Romani studies was represented by the review “Lacio Drom”, published by the Centro Studi Zingari of Rome and led by a priest, Don Bruno Nicolini. The Centre was created in 1965 at the University of Padova and in the ‘70s, after being constituted as an autonomous board, found its definitive place in Rome.

The figure of Don Bruno Nicolini in Rome is very well known to anybody who has dealt with the Roma and Sinti communities. He has devoted his whole life to this cause and until his retirement he played a vital role as the appointed Head of the Vatican Pastoral for Roma and Sinti. Even at the age of 84, although weakened and ill, never ceased visiting personally the people of the Roma encampments. He has also been the founder of the Opera Nomadi the historical support organisation for Roma and Sinti, created as a regional volunteer organisation based in Bolzano in 1963, then transformed in 1970 in national foundation<sup>18</sup>.

Mirella Karpati and Bruno Nicolini have been the first to actively engage in initiatives for the inclusion of the Roma and Sinti and for the support to their education. Their commitment led to the stipulation of an agreement between the Ministry of Education

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<sup>18</sup> A National Foundation is normally approved by a Presidential decree; in the case of Opera Nomadi, the act is the DPR n. 347, 26/03/1970.

and the Opera Nomadi with the creation of the special classes Lacio Drom (“Good Trip” in Romani language), originally hosted in local parishes and other available spaces and later on implemented in many of the Italian public schools where there were Roma or Sinti enrolled.

Between 1965 and 1970 Mirella Karpati, whose academic formation is that of a pedagogist, coordinated at the University of Padova the training of the first school teachers who were to be involved in the Lacio Drom project. The special classes for Roma lasted until 1982, when Roma and Sinti students were finally included in normal classrooms, thus ending the Lacio Drom experience.

It is worth to hint shortly to the cultural and historical atmosphere in which this review was born, because these were the years in which the whole Italian education system went through enormous changes in a new perspective of “equal access to education for all”, and the fight for the right to schooling of Romani children, goes hand in hand with this more general struggle.

The CM 1771/72 of the 11/03/1953 explained the differences between the “special classes” and the “differential classes”. The first were dedicated to pupils with physical or mental handicaps, and would be placed in designated spaces, while the second were placed in the normal schools and welcomed the so called “difficult” children.

While the special classrooms were meant to welcome handicapped children, the differential ones were destined generally to the pupils of the Italian working classes, whose destiny was that of either become early school leavers, or in the most fortunate cases, to be enrolled in the schools for the *avviamento al lavoro*, technical apprenticeship schools which were meant to give a quick entry into their future as low level workforce. But after a few years, other important changes intervened. In 1962 with

the promulgation of the L.1859 24/07/1962 which established the *scuola media* (middle school) until the 13<sup>th</sup> year of age equal for all, free and compulsive.

In 1967 a priest, don Lorenzo Milani, with his book “Lettera ad una professoressa” (1967) produced one of the most rigorous attack against the class system in school and gave life to the experiment of the “scuola di Barbiana”. In Rome another priest, Roberto Sardelli, following the example of Don Milani, established a school (the “Scuola 725”) for the inhabitants of the shanty town of the Acquedotto Felice where were living also Italian Roma (Sardelli, 1971) while another member of the Lacio Drom group, Maria Severino, taught to Roma children in the shanty town of the Mandrione (Severino, 1968) and actively fought for their right to education.

Finally, in 1969, there had been in Italy the liberalisation in the access to universities, thus allowing also those in possession of a professional institute diploma to freely enrol in Universities.

It is in this particular cultural and historical context that the classes Lacio Drom were born<sup>19</sup>.

The journal became the promoter of a new model of school open to Roma and Sinti inclusion, and since the 1960's the review, under the direction of Mirella Karpati and with the contributions of many specialists, teachers, Roma, Sinti and volunteers, animated the most important debate on the question of the schooling of Roma children in Italy.

The Lacio Drom group, made extremely clear the reasons which led to the inauguration of the Lacio Drom special classrooms, and these views are expressed by the authors in

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<sup>19</sup> See also par. 7.4.



many of the review articles (Accardo, 1966, 1967; Furlani, 1966; Karpati, 1968a, 1970, 1973, 1974, 1997a, 1997b), and in particular by M. Karpati, who states:

‘...The idea of special classes for Roma had been adopted not because we think that Roma children are subnormal, psychologically ill or because they carry any of the handicaps to which we refer when talking about special schools. We talked about special schools because it is the formula which allows us a larger flexibility in the formation of classrooms, in the determination of the age class from that of primary schools and up to 16 years, and because they allow us a different timetable and calendar. Only in this sense we have talked about special schools, and not in any other ...’ (Karpati, 1989, p. 9).

The group continued to be actively involved in the debate on schooling but also on many other themes such as that of adult education and empowerment, Roma and Sinti history, culture and languages. They promoted in the course of the years a series of surveys and researches in order to monitor the progresses in the education sector and provided a large corpus of essays and articles on this process (Di Benedetto, 1968; Griselli, 1973; Guastino and Sasso, 1976; Devona, 1982; Karpati, 1979; Karpati and Massano, 1981, 1987; Massano, 1982). The debate on the themes of the special classrooms and on Roma and Sinti education as a whole, welcomed also contributions from Roma and Sinti authors: on the need for education (Berberski, 1970; Guarnieri, 1974), in favour of special classrooms (de Dios Ramirez Heredia, 1970), on intercultural education (Tipler, 1983) and many other critical articles on the same theme (Baltzar, 1968; Radita, 1970) to quote only a few.

The journal was also interested in studying the relationship between schools and Roma families and on the issue of adult education (Karpati, 1968b, 1969, 1971; Sardelli, Manes and Karpati, 1980), and on practical proposals of intervention to encourage and support Roma and Sinti’s access to education (Karpati, 1975, 1989, 1997b), for they

understood very well how important it was to involve in the education process also the families and the adults, avoiding to direct the intervention solely on children.

Other articles concerned instead the analysis of Roma and Sinti specific situation in Italy at a local level offering data and surveys, as it is the case of the articles concerning the Roma presences in the Lazio region and in the province of Rome (Cirillo and Karpati, 1983; Karpati, Porcari and Viaggio, 1986; VV. AA., 1990; Karpati, 1997a).

The contributions of the Lacio Drom journal and of the experts who gravitated around it has been of paramount importance. For all the years of its existence it has constituted the most important source of documentation on Roma and Sinti cultures and in particular on their education, hosting contributions by international scholars and promoting debates and conferences dedicated to the study of this minority, thus becoming a point of reference for all those who were professionally interested in Romani issues.

But what in my opinion is most remarkable, is the fact that the group succeeded in the animation of an active debate and on the implementation of a network which involved national, local governments and schools, forcing the institutions to confront with this issue and take action. This atmosphere of involvement and commitment, was never to be recreated again.

Some of the Lacio Drom articles and author's views would be today considered as dated, like for example in the case of the psychological tests conducted on Roma children, with the application of CAT and FAT tests (Sasso, 1974, 1975a, 1975b), or of other contributions on the schooling (Ferrara Cenci, 1974), but the example set out by the group who created the Lacio Drom experience, and the documentation they produced remains up to date unrivalled.

In 1998 the journal ceased its publications. Unfortunately Don Bruno and his collaborators have failed to create a group of scholars and volunteers who could have continued their work, and after Don Bruno's retirement the Centre was closed down.

This event left a gap which neither institutions, nor the new NGO's in charge of the Roma schooling today in Rome have been either able or willing to fill, and the neglect into which the centre and its teamwork have been left, only reveals itself as another indicator of the abandon and of the disinterest to which Roma people are subjected.

In 2009, the book collection (with more than 3000 volumes), the archives and the collection of the Journal "Lacio Drom" have been left to a Catholic University, because Don Nicolini retired and not one of the three Roman Universities<sup>20</sup>, although invited, volunteered to take care of this large corpus of materials. Eventually one of the historians member of the original Lacio Drom group, Giorgio Viaggio, generously donated his personal collection of the journal to the University of Rome, where they are preserved in the library of the Demo-Ethno-Anthropological Department and fully accessible to students.

### **2.5.2 New approaches to Romani studies**

I have already hinted to the fact that the Romani studies represents a very marginal area of interest in Italian universities, although there are a certain number of researchers who have worked on this theme adding their original contributions to the ongoing scientific debate on Roma issues.

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<sup>20</sup> Even the famous Italian Professor and Linguist Tullio De Mauro, former Minister of Education refused to take the Archive into his custody.

In particular I want to quote here three authors: Claudio Marta, Marco Brazzoduro and Roberto De Angelis who have worked on social exclusion themes with particular attention to the case represented by Roma communities in Italy.

These researchers' works have represented important points of references for any student who wanted to write their BA graduation thesis on Romani issues and with great generosity have always offered their help and support. Many of the most interesting ethnographies conducted in Roma encampments or on the various Roma communities, have been produced by students who were doing researches under their supervision.

This activity has allowed in the course of the decades the production of a large series of studies on a topic often neglected by the mainstream scientific community and on communities and groups that have now, like in the case represented by this dissertation, disappeared.

Claudio Marta, who passed away in the winter of 2008, was an anthropologist at the University of Naples, an activist for Roma rights and an Italian member of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers at the Council of Europe. The last section of his last book, "Relazioni Interetniche: Prospettive Antropologiche", (2005), contains a detailed analysis of the dynamics of Roma integration in Italy which Marta studied and offered an historical reconstruction of the history of the Opera Nomadi and of the Centro Studi Zingari.

Marco Brazzoduro is Professor of Social Policies at the Department of Statistics at the University "La Sapienza" in Rome. Since the early '90's has dedicated himself almost exclusively to the questions concerning the Roma community in Rome. Although since 2009 he is a retired Professor, he is continuing to offer his expertise and his commitment to support the process of emancipation of the Romani groups. His

publications have been mostly dedicated to the study of Roma inclusion strategies and on social policies.

The last Italian author is Roberto De Angelis, Professor of Sociology of Intercultural Relations at the University of Rome “La Sapienza”. De Angelis has been working for all his professional life on the themes of social exclusion and urban poverties concerning both Italians, migrants and Roma, but he has also written many articles and books on the themes of drug addiction and extreme poverties (homeless).

I have had the privilege of being one of his students and my first research experiences have begun under his guidance in the various Roman shanty towns.

His works on Roma have been dedicated to the analysis of the institutional and NGO’s intervention, to the integration practices, and to the dynamics of social change.

In particular, the works of De Angelis have proved to be particularly useful for his highlighting of critical issues regarding the “Romani issue”, for example for his analysis of the birth of processes of ethnogenesis among Roma groups in Italy and on ethnic relations.

All these authors have contributed to a better knowledge of the Romani world, but their contribution has been not only scientific but also political, because all have supported in first person the Roman Roma community in many occasions; offering help during the numerous encampment evictions, participating to anti-racist demonstrations, for these reasons all three are very well known and respected among the Roman Roma and Sinti communities.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY: FIELD RESEARCH IN A NO MAN'S LAND**

#### **3.1 The research context**

In 1990 I began my first field research experiences as a Social Anthropology student in various Roman shanty towns and other informal settlements under the guidance of my former Professor Roberto De Angelis.

During the decade 1980 – 1990, Italy was becoming the target destination of many different migrant flows, and I knew how important it was to study and to document the early stages of this process.

These research experiences were mainly directed toward the study of migratory patterns in migrant workers, in particular toward those coming from the Maghrebi geographical area.

The place where my first long time experience took place, was a shanty town named Douar Bailill, inhabited by Moroccan migrants. A couple of years later, in 1992, after working for two years on the Maghrebi migrations, I met with the Roma<sup>1</sup>.

The Roma situation is completely incomparable with that of the migrants, especially in a country like Italy.

The encampments have, since the 1960's, constituted the only possibility offered to them, and this meant that for decades an entire ethnic group has been relegated in a state

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<sup>1</sup> See parr. 4.3.1 and 6.1.

of separatedness from the rest of the population. Besides, it must also be remembered that this form of residential separation was induced by public institutions, who transformed the originally temporary Roma encampments in permanent settlements in almost all the national territory.

The many Regional laws<sup>2</sup> promulgated by the Italian Regional councils during the 1980's have in fact gradually institutionalised the encampments and have contributed to crystallise the image of the Roma as "nomads" (Sigona and Bravi, 2007, pp. 866 and ff.). Although these laws were produced with the aim of "protecting the nomadic cultural differences", what they have instead sanctioned was a state of permanent residential segregation (De Angelis, 2009, p. 98).

Roma encampments are isolated and desolately barren, often placed in abandoned plots of land lost into the various Roman peripheries, far away from public transports and often also from the public sight, so that even from a spatial point of view they are symbols of separateness. But the decision to work with, and to do research in these contexts, has nothing to do with the obsession in researching the "places of extreme marginality". Quite on the contrary the contemporary Roman shanty towns inhabited either by migrants or by Roma, represent micro-sociological contexts where it is possible to analyse, through the study of a specific case, more general processes. Among these processes can be quoted for example those concerning the patterns of migrations, ethnic relations and social policies. This can enable analysis of the ways in which these issues have been addressed by national and local institutions.

It means therefore to enter into processes which surpass the specific case study analysed.

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<sup>2</sup> During the 80's were promulgated 12 Regional Laws specifically dedicated to Roma and Sinti. See Bibliography for a complete list and references of these Laws.

The term “no man’s land” is not a literary rhetorical artifice, but the most fitting description for such places.

The encampments are realities of which we know very little, even at the most elementary level like that of the population numbers. To clarify this statement, suffice to say that for what concern Italy for example, it has not been possible to make any statistical account either in Roma encampments nor in any of the numerous migrants shanty towns because the officers entrusted with the accounting were either afraid of entering these places or because they were not prepared to face the issues raised by such censuses. Researchers from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) suggested that these data should have instead been gathered by NGO workers and researchers who had the skills and the ability to undertake this kind of census survey because of their specific professional background (Cortese, 2008). This short introduction on the peculiarities of my research context and on my fieldwork will be enriched further in the course of this work with more types of data, including visual documentation.

In the next paragraphs I will discuss my methodology and explain the reasons for which I have selected ethnography and action research as the most appropriate to be used in these contexts.

### **3.2 Discussion and selection of an appropriate methodology: Ethnography**

The word ethnography defines, in the anthropological tradition, both the process of research conducted using certain specific methods, *and* the final product written by the researcher after fieldwork, normally in the style of a monograph. The object is generally that of providing a holistic account of a specific population or community or on a specific aspect concerning the same population.



In spite of its long tradition there is not any definitive definition of the term, because there are countless ethnographic models and styles. These differences are visible in the final forms that these narratives have taken, and which varies largely from author to author. Evans Pritchard (1969), Malinowski (2002), Firth (1983), Geertz (2001), the Chicago School scholars (Thrasher, 1963; Cressey, 1932) all have produced classical forms of sociological and anthropological ethnographies, in spite of the differences existing among their theoretical frameworks.

Also the expression “ethnographic approach” is quite vague and undetermined, and its meaning is so wide and generic that in Italy for example, it has been often used in an improper manner, and it has thus become a synonymous for the qualitative approach *tout court*.

In the case that concerned my research at the Casilino 700 encampment, the fieldwork has been conducted using many of the classical tools which have come to be identified as ethnographic: the long term, direct and participated observation of contexts, the use of qualitative data such as interviews and fieldnotes, the close relationships with the informants, all these elements are distinctive characters of the ethnography and represent its trademarks.

Both because of my training as a Social Anthropologist, and because of the extreme particularity of the context where my research took place, I found it impossible to undertake an in-depth research experience without referring to an ethnographic approach, but in spite of the fact that I have extensively used many of the tools peculiar to this discipline, I have not produced a classic ethnography.

In first place, there is the question concerned with the object of study. Mine was not specifically the Roma as a group and as an ethnic community, but the whole situation

concerning the Casilino 700 slum, a case in which the physical place of the research and the people are melted together.

The encampment was placed in a metropolitan context where, opposite of what happens in the classic ethnographic researches, it was impossible to establish a full time residence.

The kind of observation I have actually practised was a *reiterated* one, and it was not conducted only inside the encampment, but also outside and in many different occasions and contexts. These occasions include examples such as when there were meetings or assemblies with representatives from the institutions, or when I was going together with the Roma to document their working activities like that of recycling and which takes place in the whole metropolitan territory. In the case of the section of my research dedicated to the schooling of Roma children, I have regularly visited schools and classrooms where Roma children were enrolled.

These elements all already contribute to make my ethnography somehow anomalous, but there is also another important difference, the one related with the final product of ethnography and of its writing rhetorics.

The aim of the ethnographic writing is that of transmitting the data acquired by mean of the ethnographic research and fieldwork on a given population or on certain phenomena. Although there are no existing shared and acknowledged protocols or procedures, we can pinpoint some aspects of the writing style proposed by classic ethnographers, what Clifford defined as “ethnographic authority” (Clifford, 1993, pp. 36-71). This style generally included one or all of these four fundamental characteristics: the rhetorical use of the *ethnographic present* as a metahistorical time, the conflict among the use of the first person *versus* the impersonal description, the

ethnographer's invisibility (his personal fieldwork experience relegated to footnotes or destined to become unpublished material) and lastly, the perception and representation of the human group studied as *homogeneous*. This model entered into a definitive crisis after the publication in 1986 by G. Marcus and J. Clifford of the essay "Writing Cultures"<sup>3</sup>, and although I do not agree with many of the postmodernists issues and approaches, I have to recognise their merit in the critical and analytical efforts to deconstruct the last remnants of this "late colonial" form of narration. The publications of these works have actually made impossible to make again use of the former styles going back to the previously used frame of reference. For all these reasons together (and for others which will be explained in the two next paragraphs) I have not complied with any recognizable written ethnographic standard, and I have instead relied on action research.

### **3.2.1 Action Research**

Ethnographic researches carried on in places like the contemporary shanty towns or, like in this case, in the Roma encampments, cannot be conducted with methodologies other than that of action research, and this work has been conducted following the methods and principles peculiar to this tradition.

This term, originally coined by Kurt Lewin (1946) and applied to the study of social groups, has broadened and differentiated, and in time, it has come to identify a large variety of specific approaches. For this reason it is necessary to clarify in which way I have used this methodological approach and which are its precedents in the Italian panorama.

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. (1997) **Scrivere le culture**. Roma: Meltemi Editore.

In Italy the tradition of action research, which has been practiced since the 1950's, was never really properly established into the academic world, which for a very long time (at least until the early '80's), continued to consider such approaches as amateurish and non scientific.

Even figures that have been considered as very important at a worldwide level like Danilo Dolci (1960, 1996) were considered by the academics as outsiders, and mainly as political activists.

This was due to two main principal reasons. The first was the predominance of the American quantitative paradigm in the field of sociological studies, and the second, concerning the anthropology sector, was the fact that in Italy anthropology has for a long time devoted its attention to the study of the Italian rural cultural tradition, while these researches were mainly devoted to the study of the urban working classes. In Italy the anthropological and ethnographic research has been centred on the study of rural areas and Italian peasant's cultures, rather than the analysis of urban contexts, which until the '80's has been mainly left to sociologists.

Among the most important authors who have practiced action researches must be remembered Raniero Panzieri (1965) the already quoted Danilo Dolci, Danilo Montaldi (1961, 1970) and Gianni Bosio (1972)<sup>4</sup>.

Raniero Panzieri (1921 – 1964), a militant from the Socialist party, was a Marxist intellectual, founder of the review "Quaderni Rossi" (Red Notebooks). The central theme that Panzieri presents in the Quaderni Rossi is that of the workers enquiry. The enquiry, composed of interviews, was the mean to discovery the real conditions and ideas of the working classes. The enquiry was seen as a revolutionary tool and as a

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<sup>4</sup> Bosio gathered a large archive of oral Italian popular tradition with particular attention to folk and political traditional songs. See the official Circolo Gianni Bosio's website. [online]. Available from: <http://www.circologiannibosio.it>. [Accessed June 2009].

mean to avoid any idealistic look on the world of the working classes. In 1965 Panzieri states that:

‘... The method of inquiry should enable us to defy all kinds of mystical ideas about the workers’ movement. It should always warrant a scientific observation of the level of consciousness of the working class, and also provide a way of raising it. Thus there is a definite continuity between the moment of sociological investigation guided by rigorous and serious criteria, and political action: sociological inquiry is a kind of mediation that averts the risks of reaching a vision of the level of workers’ antagonism and awareness that, whether pessimistic or optimistic, would be completely gratuitous. This has important consequences for the political aims of inquiry and I would say that it is the main aim of inquiry in itself. ....’ (Panzieri, 1965, p. 2).

Panzieri’s workers enquiries are action researches by all means. They were conducted in the places of work with the workers themselves, because the moment of the interview and of the discussion, were seen as tools to increase the workers awareness and their class consciousness.

A very different figure is that of Danilo Dolci (1924 – 1997). Dolci was a sociologist, a poet and a non-violence activist. His work is still considered as a benchmark and a model at a worldwide level. Dolci’s first experiences go back to the 50’s, when together with the priest Don Zeno, they opened an orphanage which came after few years to host 3000 war orphans. In 1952, after political and Vatican pressures, the orphanage was closed down and Danilo Dolci decided to move to the south of Italy ‘to work among the poorest of the poor’, and settled in the small fishermen village of Trappeto, in Sicily. There he began to work with Sicilian fishermen and peasants using interviews and discussions as a tool to support the process of emancipation.

Among his most famous initiatives must be remembered his feast on the bed of a child dead of hunger, the 1952 collective strike, where more than 1000 people feasted against

the practices of illegal fishing, or the 1956 “strike in reverse” in Partinico, when hundreds of unemployed persons worked together to mend a public road.

With the money won for the Lenin Prize in 1958, he founded in Partinico the Centre of Research and Initiatives for Full Employment<sup>5</sup>.

His maieutic<sup>6</sup> practices were dedicated to the community empowerment by mean of the dialogic method as a way to increase self consciousness and awareness and to encourage the growth of a culture of legality and justice in a territory like the Sicilian one. This was among the poorest and less developed areas in Italy, and strangled by the Mafia. Today Danilo Dolci’s heritage of practices is considered a model for many organisations, and after his death the Centre for documentation is still very active continuing the work he begun.

Danilo Montaldi and Gianni Bosio also contributed to the diffusion of the biographical method, but for reasons of space and pertinence, their works will not be discussed here<sup>7</sup>.

This introduction dedicated to the protagonists of the Italian action research scene, was necessary in order to offer to the foreign reader some background information on the specific Italian context, and also to explain the reasons for which this methodology has been for a very long time neglected by Italian departments of sociology and anthropology, whose scene at the time was under the influence of very different scientific paradigm.

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<sup>5</sup> See Danilo Dolci’s official website:

[http://www.danilodolci.it/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.danilodolci.it/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1) [Accessed February 2010].

<sup>6</sup> Maieutic: Socratic, serving to bring out a person’s latent ideas into clear consciousness. Oxford English Dictionary 1993.

<sup>7</sup> For what concern Gianni Bosio must also be remembered his collaboration with the review Quaderni Rossi, edited by the aforementioned Raniero Panzieri.

It was only during the '80's, with the revalorisation of the biographical method, that the academics have recognized the importance of their works, and finally acknowledged that these were true methodological pioneers.

In other countries, the tradition of action research has had more fortune than in Italy, for example in France and in the Latin America. In particular the influence of the French school of the so called *institutional analysis* has been of paramount importance for my work. These authors conducted action researches analysing institutions and its functioning in places such as schools, hospitals, prisons etc.

It is mainly toward this tradition of action research to which I have referred while building the theoretical structure of my work and my fieldwork.

Every ethnographic approach cannot but be considered as an action research, but this does not means to confuse the role of the researcher with that of a political activist.

Militants are generally not worried by issues tied to the problem of scientific knowledge. On the other hand the researcher soon comes to realise that in order to conduct his research he must be continuously involved in the collective social dynamics and in the practices and the processes that he registers and observes during his fieldwork, and of which he is a part. This takes us straight to one of the main concepts of this action research: the concept of involvement.

### **3.2.2 Characteristics of Action Research: Involvement**

I have already explained how my work has made extensive use of the ethnographic method although I have not produced a "classic" ethnographic work. It has been based and carried on a practice of daily participant observation which recurred principally to the action research paradigm.

Action researches conducted in places like the shanty town object of this study, cannot be divided from the operational concept of involvement, a constitutive and grounding element of any action research.

This concept (in French “implication”) has been theorised extensively and practiced by the French school of the institutional analysis, founded by Prof. Georges Lapassade and continued by his scholars (R. Lourau, R. Hess and others)<sup>8</sup>.

The involvement is ‘the way in which the researcher is captured by his object’ (Hess and Weigand, 2008, p.75), and the peculiarity of this approach lies on the willingness of ‘establishing a permanent relation between research and changes’ (Hess and Weigand, 2008. p. 52).

The involvement places the researcher inside the situation not as a simple (although “thick”) observer, but like one of the actors who are actively participating to the ongoing social processes.

Exceptions are made for the classic researches undertaken during the colonial period, where the informants role was considered under a completely different light. In contemporary contexts we can only do research if we *demonstrate* also our reliability as persons, first than as researchers.

It is therefore very normal, and a part of the complexity of the research process, that in order to continue to work in such contexts as social actors we need to engage in a degree of involvement and active participation.

My role at the encampment was that of a researcher who could be a witness *and* an actor. Practical examples of this approach have involved the activity of mediation that I have undertaken between the encampment’s population and the institutions.

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<sup>8</sup> There is also a review named **Les cahiers de l’implication** [online], edited by former students of Professor G. Lapassade. Available from: <http://cahiers.implication.free.fr/>. [Accessed February 2010].



For example, due to the fact that the encampments are always placed in extreme peripheries and far away from any service, if a child for example got somehow hurt, I would accompany him to the hospital together with the family members.

The depth and the meaningfulness of the relation allows us to be informed and to be aware of a whole series of issues on which we are requested by the community we work with, to take a stand.

From 1992 to the year 2000 the emergencies and the various requests for information and help were practically continuous, and they have not stopped, even after the eviction from the Casilino 700 and the relocation in the new authorized encampment of via Salviati 2.

I have undertook, in the course of my years of fieldwork, many actions of “service” toward the encampment’s residents, and these activities have offered me the possibility of having access to many other data non collectable in other ways.

Further, they also represented a practical way to support and help the community involved.

I had noticed for example, that when I accompanied the Roma to the Police offices to apply for a permit of stay, their treatment was better than if they were going there alone, at the same time my presence helped the Roma in the understanding of the institutional mechanism and their regulations and norms.

For nearly four years I have also offered a service of school support for the encampment’s children in need of this kind of help in an abandoned hut that was given to me from the Roma for this purpose. This school support has been also a way to gather first hand data on the effective school competencies acquired by these minors enrolled in the neighbourhood schools.

These two activities have been a fundamental and grounding base of the initial work of negotiating the field. They have been a way to thank the hospitality and generosity of the people of the encampment, but they have also allowed me to gather important data and indicators, for example for what concern the relationship with institutions. It was important to verify personally the existing problems and gaps among these two subjects, whose relationship is often affected by forms of racism and discrimination or, in some cases, by simple reciprocal misunderstandings.

Lastly, my daily presence has allowed me to record and to witness in person important events from the social and ritual point of view, from the happy ones (births, marriages or other formalised occasions of meeting and partying) to the dramatic ones, like it has happened in the case of the deaths which have occurred at the encampment, or other moments of social drama like the situation produced by the periodic and partial evictions and replacements which have with periodical frequency afflicted the encampment.

Active involvement in my opinion, is the only real *ethical* way to do research in these environments, and at least for what has concerned my personal research experience, is the only satisfactory and correct way to access the field.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

The works of research conducted in extremely degraded areas, and as in this particular case, with extremely vulnerable groups such as the Roma, demands to the researcher to deal with particular attention and sensitivity with the target population and with the data treatment. For this reason, ethical issues must be seriously considered during fieldwork, in the process of data gathering and in the final process of synthesis and writing.

Roma are subjected to a social discrimination and a stigma that has no equal for any other ethnic groups and these elements must be taken into serious account by every person that for some reason or other are dealing with this minority.

Since my first arrival at the encampment I have introduced myself and explained that I was doing a research on Roman slums and in particular on that of Casilino 700. I knew the Moroccans who were at the time living together with the Roma in Casilino already since 1990, and I have always been welcomed with sympathy and affection. I was considered as a reliable person. To all the informants who participated, I have explained clearly and in more than one occasion the themes, the purposes and the methodology of my research project.

All the interviews gathered have had the previous consent of the person involved, and whether on audio or video, their content has been transcribed and either given back to the informants or re-read to them in case they were illiterate. This proceeding allowed the interviewed to control his contribution and to make corrections or to cut or add other parts which he/she might have forgotten to include.

The iconographic documentation also has been collected with the approval of the Roma and of the Moroccans involved, and in the case of the production of a documentary, two Romnià have been involved in the editing and post production process and have been involved as translators.<sup>9</sup>

I have provided assistance in the explanation of bureaucratic and legal issues and offered other small services of advice and orientation.

Researchers at a certain point leave their field of work, and after the publication of the report they very seldom continue to entertain relationships with the population they

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<sup>9</sup> More information on the iconographic documentation can be found in par. 3.6.

have worked with. In my case there has been no interruption, because I have continued to work with the Roma community up to date as a Roma rights activist and in my capacity as a member of a Roma grassroots organisation (the *Romà Onlus*) with which during the last two years I have been involved as a researcher and project developer, and as a teacher for the school support in the training of both Roma adolescents and adults.

### **3.4 Personal motivations for the study**

Although I am a researcher and have now become an intellectual, I consider myself the result of a social *metissage*.

My father was born in one of the many shanty towns<sup>10</sup> where Mussolini's regime had placed "temporarily" the proletarians evicted from the historical centre of Rome. The evictions were originated from the destruction of historical houses (Borgo, Trastevere) or from the "relocations" enacted in order to rent at much higher prices the houses once owned by Romans in historical neighbourhoods such as Trastevere, Campo de' Fiori and in many others<sup>11</sup>.

My social origins have directed me toward the study of urban social exclusions phenomena, and this is the main reason for which I have dedicated myself to the study and the documentation of this situations.

When I have arrived for the first time at the encampment to meet with the Moroccans I already knew, the Roma came immediately close to me to ask me who I was and what I was doing in the encampment. I presented myself and explained that I wanted to study the encampment's situation and the needs and the histories of the people who were living there.

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<sup>10</sup> Vigna Mangani, in the eastern part of Rome.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter Four.

I explained that I was a Social Anthropologist and that I was collecting material for my thesis and that my data and fieldwork would be summarised in a publication that would constitute my final dissertation thesis for the University.

The Roma were very curious about me, and even though I had explained in several occasions that I was a researcher, still they wanted to know more about me as a *person*, and to know what strange sort of studies I was doing that would take me into places like Casilino 700.

My fieldwork used to start early in the morning, sometimes going to school with the children on the school bus, and some other times accompanying women in their daily searches for recyclable material in the neighbourhood dustbins or when collecting drinkable water at the nearest public fountains. Often in the afternoons, when there was nothing else to do, I would sit with families or with small female groups having coffee and discussing the most various issues.

During these informal occasions I have shown pictures of my father's old shanty town, Vigna Mangani, and they were completely surprised to discover that also Italians once lived in huts. Many thought I was Roma as well because of the physical appearance of my grand-grand-mother Teresa. In a picture from the 1950's I have shown them, she is holding my father while wearing the traditional Roman costume with the long black skirt, the white long sleeved shirt and the traditional coral necklace and golden and coral earrings. In our tradition (as well as in that of the Roma) this is offered as a gift to the pregnant women, as it is believed to protect the mother and child from the evil eye.

This is the way in which we came to know each other better, and our relationship deepened and gained substance and strength day after day.

These hours of free discussions have been occasions where it has been possible to discuss freely many important and different issues, from family life to tradition, to marriages, cooking recipes and sometimes simply having fun together. These have been in my opinion, real intercultural encounters, where it has been possible to exchange opinions and information about our history and family background.

I have tried to do my best to communicate with my personal history. This included the fact that even a person with a familiar background of poverty like mine, could gain emancipation through the access to education. I believe that promoting both self-awareness and reflection is an important step for Roma emancipation, at least if we want to practice action research also as a mean to empower communities and to encourage personal development.

### **3.5 Multiple data gathering**

One of the characteristics of my work of research is the fact that the typology of data used for the construction of this work has been much differentiated, and in this sense I can describe my research as built with multiple types of data.

This collating of multiple sources has been made necessary by the complexity of my object of study, a contemporary multiethnic shanty town in Rome, whose study has requested to recur to different kinds of data gathering because it interfaced many different aspects: historical, sociological and anthropological, thus including also quantitative information.

For what concern strictly the fieldwork in the encampment, I have used free and semi-structured interviews, quantitative questionnaires, audiovisual data and, most of all, my fieldwork notes and daily observation of contexts.

Since the object of study included also the assessment of the institutional and NGO's policies and interventions, another part of my research also involved a number of privileged witnesses to whom I have administered structured and semi-structured interviews. These privileged witnesses were mainly institutional figures (teachers, social workers, etc.) who were all, at different levels, been involved with the Casilino 700 population. In the following paragraphs I will present all the sources I have used in the course of this work.

### **3.5.1 Qualitative data**

Normally, in all of the works I have realised up to date regarding migrations and migrants, the main data source is constituted by recorded interviews that in some cases have developed into life-histories.

These in-depth interviews basically have been oriented toward themes like that of the migratory trail, the situation in the country of origin (former occupations, forms of housing etc.) and then, the arrival to Italy and the problems concerning the daily life's problems.

In some cases, these interviews have transformed into life-histories of the interviewed. All these materials are either video or audio recorded and then transcribed. After being transcribed and printed I would go back to the person to give a copy of the transcript or, in case the subject was illiterate or unable to read properly, to re-read him/her the interview in case he/she wanted to add, remove or correct something that was there recorded.

For this reason the research times became much longer, but I was determinate in activate a relation of cooperation and awareness of the research issues and methods.

Also for what concerned my fieldwork research at the Casilino 700, interviews had been administered in the course of the years and in different occasions to the Moroccan and Roma inhabitants of the slum. These semi-structured and free interviews were aimed at reconstructing the personal migratory trail and the relations activated by the subject, and their work and life experiences in Rome.

The Moroccan community was formed by around hundred of men alone, who had occupied the central part of the encampment after the destruction of the bidonville where they were originally living. At their dwelling I have gathered 13 individual interviews and two small group interviews, two of which in video<sup>12</sup>.

Other interviews have been done with privileged witnesses like NGO workers and members of the different institution that for one reason or another have come into contact with the encampment (teachers, local politicians, police officers, social assistants etc.)<sup>13</sup>. Among those interviewed were the President of the VIIth District Council, the Social Assistant who was responsible for the schooling of Roma children, the primary school teacher Domenico Forte, Roberto Vallocchia and Paolo Perrini, respectively responsible for the schooling of Roma children on behalf of two NGO's (Opera Nomadi the first, ARCI the second) and the Head of the local Police Station.

Another group of interviews (also partly recorded in video) have instead been dedicated to the Italians living in the Centocelle neighbourhood where the encampment was placed<sup>14</sup>.

This part of the research and the interviews has proven very useful since they served to understand the state of the ethnic relations between the Italian residents and the Roma, and to determine the eventual "weak points" in this relationship.

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<sup>12</sup> Video documentation will be discussed here in par. 3.5.3.

<sup>13</sup> See here par. 7.4.

<sup>14</sup> See here par. 5.4.



With regard to the data gathering within the Roma community I have proceeded in a different way, because after having gathered a few interviews I have come to realise that the data I was recording were not reliable.

Roma have lived for centuries like a social body separated from the wider society context, this attitude helped to protect themselves by the terrible prosecutions they have faced for all their history and even to date.

This is not the place where to discuss the question related with the true and false in ethnography, the issue is far too complex and deserves a specific study, but there are two important elements. The first and most important is the one concerning the perception of the community as a homogeneous object<sup>15</sup>. In the occasion of structured formal interviews for example, I realised that in doing so I would have had access to only one voice, that of the adult male head of the family. For this reason I have made a very limited use of this tool, being more interested in approaching the variety of the group registering all the voices, according to gender, age and social differentiation.

The second element lies in the fact that I was totally aware that the material I was gathering with these formal interviews was the product of a setting, and that in this setting I was able to acquire only very generic statements.

The interviews proved to be effective only when they were directed to the acquisition of precise data concerning, for example, the migratory trail and the previous working experience in Bosnia and in the other countries visited, but when I asked the interviewee to offer personal evaluations there was an irreconcilable hiatus among what the interviewee affirmed and his/her real behaviour and belief.

Roma have never been secretive with me, because during all these years we came to

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<sup>15</sup> See here par. 3.2 on the constitutive elements of classic ethnographies of the past: Ethnographer's invisibility, atemporal and objectifying style, homogeneity of the group studied.

know each other very well, and I have gained this trust with my daily behaviour and activities during all these years, but I realised that in front of the tape recorder the interviews became immediately very formal and banal.

After all that years Roma found very fun the idea that I could ask something as if I had never been there, and often the answer would be ‘But you know all these things you are seeing them with your eyes’. Roma have always tried to help me with my research, but I soon realised that these “staged” interviews were of no use, and informal conversations and the practice of the action research quickly replaced this tool. I have used this instrument only in order to collect general information about what problems were most pressing at the encampment, or what did the Roma suggested to improve integration or about the schooling of their children.

After having quit with the formal interviews, I relied instead on my daily fieldwork, with the long and direct observation of contexts and on my fieldnotes.

Except for these cases, for all the others concerning the Roma, the most useful materials have come from the long, direct and daily participation to the encampment’s life, thus confirming the validity and the efficaciousness of my methodological framework.

### **3.5.2 Quantitative analysis:**

During my stay at the encampment, I also engaged in the collection and analysis of quantitative data in three separate occasions. The encampment was very large and distributed on an enormous portion of land, it was very important for me to have reliable data on the settlements presences and on the migratory trails.

The first of these occasions came in 1994, when I personally verified and helped to integrate and correct the first official census of the encampment, carried on by the

Special Office for Immigration and by the VIIth NAE<sup>16</sup> group.

This first version of this encampment census reported several errors in the recording of kinship relations and often also in the transcription of names, places and years of birth. This could prove very damaging when the persons registered would have eventually tried to apply for a permit of stay or for any other official and institutional office or schools.

The simple misspelling of a surname<sup>17</sup> could create immense problems. For example in the cases of the request for a permit of stay if the name was misspelled, it was impossible to be corrected directly by the competent Police Officers, but the whole procedure had to be made all over again, thus condemning the person in question to other long bureaucratic nightmares and to the danger of not being in possession of a regular documentation during this period.

The second occasion was in 1996, when the CENSIS<sup>18</sup> had been entrusted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to produce a research to verify the “Propensity of Bosnian refugees in Rome to re-enter Bosnia”. On this occasion I was contacted by this Research Institute because it was known that I had been working for several years in Casilino 700 which was inhabited for the largest part by Bosnian refugees, and I have been entrusted with the part of research that concerned Bosnian refugees of Roma background.

Lastly, the third data gathering has been organised and administered by me under the form of a map of the needs of the encampment and family skills assessment (occupation, education, housing condition in the place of origin etc.). These data had

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<sup>16</sup> NAE is an acronym for “Nucleo Assistenza Emarginati”. It is a department of the Rome Municipality Police composed of officers particularly sensitive to the problem of social exclusion. Their work is directed to immigrants, Roma, homeless, drug addicts and others considered as “social emergencies”.

<sup>17</sup> An event which occurs very often due to the fact that Police Officers at the Foreign Office are not trained in the languages of the migrants they meet. For this reason often for misspelling, the permit of stay which took so long to obtain is declared null, and all the procedure must be started all over again.

<sup>18</sup> CENSIS (Centro Studi e Investimenti Economici e Sociali).

been gathered in order to help the inhabitants of the encampment in the task of finding a job with the help of one of the many NGO's who have passed at the Casilino 700 during the years of its existence.

Up to today these data are still in my possession and in spite of my numerous requests they have never been used by anyone. This is another indicator of the level of interest towards this minority.

### **3.5.3 Iconographic documentation**

The term "urgent anthropology" has been historically referred to groups and situations at risk of disappearing but I think that this definition can be properly applied also to cases like the ones represented by the Casilino 700 and other informal urban dwellings.

The abusive and precarious nature of these places puts them at continuous risk of being destroyed, and although there are many cases of historical encampments, during the last ten years the policies of the Roman Municipality Council have gradually turned to zero tolerance<sup>19</sup>.

Before the year 2000, they had been somehow tolerated and could rely for their existence, on the institutional willingness of "turning a blind eye" on the presence of such dwellings, even when their extension was very large, like in the cases of the Casilina 700 and 900 encampments.

This permissivism was based on the knowledge that the largest part of the resident population was deprived of the possibility of having access to better accommodation, and

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<sup>19</sup> Today (2009 – 2010) the policies of the Roman municipal Council are directed toward the creation of thirteen encampments mostly on the outskirts of the city and on the eviction and destruction of the old ones disseminated in various areas of the town periphery. See: Municipality of Rome Plan for Nomads (2009) [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed February 2010].

Casilino 700 represented a starting point for this change of attitudes. Since the year 2000, the evictions have taken place ordinarily, as soon as they are discovered in order to avoid massive settlements of people.

In the light of these new policies, a case like that represented by the Casilino 700 is therefore much unique, and for this reason an important part of my research is that represented by photographic and video documentation gathered in the course of the years at the encampment.

The iconographic part is the one where it is much easier for the social actors involved to fully understand what our work is about and to control what we are doing in the field.

The video recording of situations and landscapes constitutes an important source of informations especially regarding the spatial organisation of the group and its use of the territory.

This dwelling, opposite to the “authorized” encampments, had the peculiarity of being completely self managed, and the spatial distribution of huts and their placement, have helped me to trace family and friendship relations among the Roma.

Since the year 1992 I have collected almost 300 photos and some ten hours of video recording. Only a few samples of this material are reported in this work.

All the visual material I have recorded in the course of the fieldwork, has been given in copy to the persons who were there portrayed. In some cases (three marriages and a birth), I have been asked to make a video for the families involved<sup>20</sup> which I did as another small service activity.

In the case of some of the Moroccan migrants, I have been asked to record on videotape

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<sup>20</sup> In one of this cases, the material has been edited and it gave origin to the documentary **Silvana cambia casa**. (2005) Film. Author: Rossi M. Italy (Orisa Film, 11'). Presented in 2005 at the Conference **Iperurbs**, organised for the anniversary of the 700 years of the foundation of the University of Rome “La Sapienza”.

“videoletters”, to be sent to the families and relatives left in Morocco and who were illiterate<sup>21</sup>.

### **3.5.4 Institutional acts:**

A great mass of interesting and useful material is the one produced by statutory bodies in the forms of official acts such as local deliberations, regulations and in the public bids that are periodically issued by various institutional actors and dedicated to the Roma communities.

This vast corpus of material can be divided into two main areas: long term and short term projects.

In the first group ought to be placed the major interventions such as the logistic of the encampments (placement of container, chemical toilets etc.) and the schooling projects.

These two interventions are the ones which have been implemented regularly since the ‘80’s and entrusted to NGO’s by mean of public bids (see Chapter Seven).

Both the management of the encampments and the schooling of Roma children represent alone the most consistent economic effort enacted by the Municipality of Rome.

The second group of projects includes instead smaller scale interventions, often financed either by the District Council where the encampment is placed, or by competent Departments (Social Policies, Education, Health etc.).

The analysis of these documents and acts is of great importance for a researcher interested in the themes of integration because they represent an excellent source of information on the social policies enacted offering an invaluable insight on the

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<sup>21</sup> These materials have not been included in the research nor transcribed.

institution's behaviour and on its priorities and guidelines.

Projects on the subjects of Roma communities are produced by many different public bodies, but in order to delimitate the field of study for my research to the Casilino 700 encampment, I have studied only the bids and projects directed toward this settlement and dealing with the schooling (financed by the Rome Municipality), and other smaller projects implemented by the local VIIth District Council.

Another important source of information came from the participation in the many reunions, assembly and other events organised by institutions, citizens associations and NGO's and dedicated to the Casilino 700 encampment. These occasions have offered an invaluable contribution to my research. In first place, for their importance as tools to evaluate the various governance issues raised by the encampment presence, and secondly, because they allowed me to see directly how the Roma question was handled (in some cases maybe the correct word would be *mauled*) as a tool to fuel intolerance and racism and as a mean to justify the implementation of securitarian policies as the best way to solve social problems and emergencies.

### **3.5.5 Press reports and articles:**

During its existence, the encampment of Casilino 700 has periodically attracted the interest of both the media and the press.

The role of the press and of the media corporations has been very important during these last twenty years, especially for what has concerned data on the Roma community.

Even enlightened, left-winged newspapers such as *la Repubblica*<sup>22</sup> have often contributed to the diffusion of prejudices against Roma, favouring the creation of an anti Roma feeling contributing to strengthen the prejudices against this minority.

This is not the place to undertake an in-depth analysis of the language used and of the article contexts and on the social construction of the “Roma danger”, but certainly the press influence is a factor that must be taken into account. Apart from the already quoted case of “*la Repubblica*” there is also the vast universe of the right wing press, that almost everyday reports some news on Roma, generally on the degraded conditions of the encampments and the risks they pose to the resident population in terms of health issues, or on Roma criminality<sup>23</sup>.

This negative labelling process has been going on since decades. G. Gentilini, Mayor of the city of Treviso and a member of the North Liga, in a public meeting in 2008 openly affirmed that he ‘wanted to eliminate all the gipsy (*zingari*) children’<sup>24</sup>, after that he was found guilty of instigation of racism, and sentenced with a ban on participation in public meetings for three years and 4.000 euro fine (penalty suspended). However he still has a role in the Treviso City Council as Vice Mayor, and there have been no signs that he will resign from his role. This short digression served to offer to the non Italian reader an idea of the differences existing in regard to race crime between two European countries like Great Britain and Italy, a very interesting issue that requires further studies.

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<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly enough, this newspaper was the first to use the derogative term “*casbah*” to define the immigrant’s informal settlements of the late ‘80’s like the “Pantanella” and many others.

<sup>23</sup> See in Bibliography, the long list of newspapers and magazines articles on the case of the “Casilino 700”.

<sup>24</sup> See the video of Gentilini’s intervention of the 14/09/2008 [online]. Available from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA-f9i8DYmk>. [Accessed December 2009].



The articles I have used in this work have been written for the largest part during the last two years of the encampment's existence.

In particular, those regarding the eviction and the consequent destruction of the encampment are the more interesting, because they offer a very precise account of the Italian model of welcoming and of the way in which to handle emergencies.

For the 2000 year Jubilee the Mayor, the Prefetto and of the whole Municipality and District Councils of Rome, managed to welcome more than 3 million of Catholic pilgrims, while they were completely unable to deal with 1.200 Bosnian Roma refugees, half of which were underage.

The case of the Casilino 700 though, is not the only one. When it comes to Roma, the interventions proceed all following the same well known pattern: evictions and destructions of settlements with the consequent deportation of the remaining "regular" Roma to another encampment, while the vast majority of all the others (either undocumented, or with a previous expulsion order issued) are left to cope for themselves.

The interviews and the articles I used are showing all these events, and although they refer to the year 2000, they could easily be describing the present day situation, because while I am writing this, there is the ongoing eviction of two other Roman historical encampments, that of the Casilino 900<sup>25</sup> and that of Tor de' Cenci. Sadly enough, the practices toward the Roma have not changed a bit, in spite of the fact that more than fifteen years have passed since the events occurred at the Casilino 700.

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<sup>25</sup> Vincenzi M. E. 2010. Casilino 900, i rom vanno via. **la Repubblica** Cronaca di Roma, 20 Jan. p.4. [online]. Available from: <http://roma.repubblica.it/dettaglio/casilino-900-i-rom-vanno-via/1834027>. [Accessed January 2010].

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CITY AND THE SLUM

#### **4.1 Rome: The making of the informal city.**

To the arriving tourist, Rome prevalently displays her artistic and museological aspects, with the imperial monuments, the Renaissance and Baroc churches and, in general, all those characteristics for which the city gained the attribute of “eternal”.

But the careful observer cannot avoid considering also other elements, pretty different, and much less glorious which are nonetheless parts of Rome’s constitutive identity.

The aim of this section is to serve as an introduction in order to give an account relevant to the topic under discussion regarding the historical and political conditions which determined the present Roman situation and conditioned the city’s development under the sign of informality.

To fully understand these conditions we should undertake a short historical digression and go back to the years in which the Italian unification took place, under the rule of the Savoy royal family.

In general this brief excursion will describe the conditions before Unity and the forces and ideals that supported this unification and created Rome as we know her today. In particular, urbanistic and economic aspects will be considered in the light of the dialectics formal/informal that represents the most original characteristic of contemporary Rome.

During the trip from the Fiumicino or Ciampino Airport up to Rome, some specific aspects of the territory become evident. The Roman countryside, now desolate in many parts, is strewn by big and large sheds and warehouses. Not an industry in sight, not one productive activity.

Toward the end of via della Magliana vecchia (or of the Appia-Tuscolana if coming from Ciampino) the city's suburbs are in sight: barren areas alternates with other areas intensively exploited from a building point of view. Now and then, appears the few orchards left, isolated sheep flocks and small country and farm houses, surrounded and besieged by the new constructions.

Cars and lorries proceed at walking pace, on roads either patently inadequate or perennially under repair. The traffic flux is concentrated on the ancient Consular Roads that since Roman era constituted the road of access that leads to Rome.

In Rome extreme opulence and undescribable poverty have coexisted since immemorable times, and the main characteristics and the striking contradictions of the pre-unitarian Italy, and in particular of the Papacy, are noticed and described by many of the foreign artists and intellectuals who completed their cultural formation by travelling to Italy between XVIII and XIX century for the "Grand Tour"<sup>1</sup>.

The situation of the Papacy was unaltered since its foundation, and these, in short, were the background conditions on the eve of the unity. Lands and tenements were inalienably held by aristocracy and Curia by mean of feudal institutions such as the mortmain.

This state of things was further aggravated by the backwardness of the agricultural system of production, the lack of skilled labourers and the difficulties in

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<sup>1</sup> The list of Rome's important visitors is very long, it will suffice to quote the names of people such as Goethe, Stendhal, Dickens, Yeats and many others who wrote diaries and travelling notes which are today extremely useful for a description of the surrounding milieu.

communication<sup>2</sup> with other markets. All these aspects characterised the production system in the pre-unitarian Pontiff's State.

Main popular activities were agriculture and herdmanship. Ancient systems of land tenure such as the emphyteusis<sup>3</sup> were largely practised throughout the whole territory, and therefore the production levels were very low.

Apart from peasants and shepherds, the rest of the population lived on income deriving from charities, begging and from the small trades connected to the city's surviving tradition as a religious and tourist centre.

Aristocrats and the Curia were embedded with each other because the ecclesiastical career was a very common choice among Roman aristocratic families. Some others instead, occupied key places of financial importance such as Banks (*Istituti di Credito*)<sup>4</sup> or decided to work as politicians in the town's Municipality's council.

In this general situation the arrival of the Royal Army commanded by Raffaele Cadorna in Rome on the 20 September 1870 represented for many enlightened and democratic citizens the hope for a new course, after centuries of feudal theocracy. But as we will see further on, the transition to the new government failed to ensure the sprint toward modernity in which many patriots had believed.

The new Piedmontese government decidedly pushed in favor of Rome as an administrative centre, and openly opposed to any kind of industrial settlement.

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<sup>2</sup> Roads were without maintenance and therefore in a very bad state, besides, they were also dangerous, due to the presence of bands of brigands.

<sup>3</sup> Emphyteusis, according to the "Shorter Oxford English Dictionary" definition is: 'In Roman law and many civil law jurisdictions: a long-term or perpetual lease, heritable and alienable'. In this system tenants were obliged to ameliorate the land and make it productive, and to correspond to the owner a certain quantity of natural products. Taxes on these funds were also to be paid by the tenants.

<sup>4</sup> The great patrician families were involved in first person in the management of institutes such as the *Banco di Santo Spirito*, the *Cassa di Risparmio di Roma* and, after 1880, the *Banco di Roma*, under the guidance of the Chigi, Borghesev and Torlonia families (Caracciolo, 1993, p. 150).

In the north of Italy this was the period of the great investments in metallurgy, chemicals, mechanicals, but Rome was completely left out from the ongoing industrial revolution.

Giolitti's government had the firm intention of avoiding the formation of an industrial proletariat in the Capital, and therefore the formation of an area of possible future class conflicts. Parliamentary and Municipal reports criticise this approach, lamenting the fact that Rome had been willingly deprived of any possibility of industrial development<sup>5</sup>.

After the unification, the traditional Roman economic activities changed abruptly. The new State's civil servants would be immigrants coming from Turin or Florence, both former capital of the Savoy State (*Regno del Piemonte e delle due Sicilie*).

Nearly all the civil servants were coming from these two cities<sup>6</sup> and the King himself, although he had agreed to the transfer of the Capital from Florence to Rome, was always reluctant in leaving his native Piemonte<sup>7</sup>. The arrival of a great number of these "institutional" *Piemontesi* foreigners, provoked a rise in the house prices and caused the first expulsions of Roman citizens from the inner city, inaugurating a tendency that would last until the present times.

With the new government in town, many things changed for the inhabitants. Suffices here to quote only two of the many aspects in life that became very diverse. From now on, all citizens of male sex and proper age ought to serve for a compulsory military service, and with the new State, new taxes were collected, exasperating an already unstable economic situation.

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<sup>5</sup> (Caracciolo, 1993, pp. 248-254).

<sup>6</sup> This attitude also hid the belief that the southern Italy was an underdeveloped place, and homeland to brigands. The south of Italy was used basically as a hunting territory for the Aristocrats. If in present days someone travels up to the Region of Molise (very close to Lazio) can form an idea of the condition of the Italian southern territories in former times.

<sup>7</sup> (Caracciolo, 1993, p. 247).

The high prices for both goods and housing, soon reduced the working classes to misery.

In June 1866 and 1867 two Royal laws ordered the abolition and the sale of the *Asse Ecclesiastico*<sup>8</sup>. As a consequence, the former State of Church had to sell a big part of its possessions. At the same time many of the aristocrats began to buy huge plots of land and estates. After centuries of calmness Rome became the centre of a capitalistic expansion based on land and real estates sales. From now on, building will be the leading business in the whole city area<sup>9</sup>.

During this period an important change occurred in Rome's features, because huge portions of land in the hand of the Curia and the Aristocracy were subdivided into allotments and sold.

Speculation was now the magic word which attracted the interests of financial groups from abroad and from the north of Italy, and prepared the field for a new sack of Rome. City plans were produced, in an attempt to regulate a tendency that since the beginning appears as chaotic, but the penetration of the private interests of landowners, bankers and builders in the Municipality council, who invested in the building industry in Rome, defeated every attempt to control the city's urbanistic development.

The first official City Plan goes back to 1873 and it is the evident product of strong economic interests and pressures alien to any urbanistic evaluation (Caracciolo, 1993, p.103). The situation was such that the deriving line of urbanistic expansion was

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<sup>8</sup> The laws in question are: law 07/07/1866 concerning the abolition of Religious Orders and Corporations, and the law 15/09/1867 concerning the Sale of the Ecclesiastical Patrimony (in general "Asse" is the whole patrimony, not only the real estate).

<sup>9</sup> The abolition of all feudal privileges had been only formal, since only the same families of landowners could afford to buy the allotment of land sold in agreement with the 1867's laws. Besides, because of the family connections mentioned before between the Curia and the Aristocracy, often the land remained in the hands of the same families, who simply sold it as a cleric, and re-bought it through his family, as a private citizen.

described by Caracciolo with the efficacious expression “building anarchy” (Caracciolo, 1993, p. 104).

The other City Plans, from 1909 to 1931 are products of the same interests. The stakes were far too high to be stopped by social, artistic or urbanistic considerations.

In twenty years Rome saw the systematic destruction of her patrimony of Villas and Parks: Villa Ludovisi, Villa Massimo, Villa Spithover, Villas Perucchi, Torlonia, Bolognetti, Capizzucchi, Patrizi, Albani, Bonaparte, Reinach, Magnani, Sacripanti, Strozzi, de’ Vecchi, Olgiati, Alberini, Gonzaga, Altieri, Mandosi and many others<sup>10</sup>.

The Roman landscape was brutally transformed.

#### **4.1.1 The city and the slum**

While Rome was transformed into a building yard, the population numbers rose, due to the arrivals of new immigrants arrived attracted by the opportunity of a job in the then flourishing building sector. The city experienced an unprecedented popular expansion, and while the policy of allotments created new urban settlements in the newly formed suburbs, peasants and shepherds turn into builders.

Since their numbers was greater than that of popular houses, these impoverished people would find shelter wherever possible: the open space in Campidoglio square, or under the *portici* and more often in huts, often built by the municipality itself (Insolera, 2001, pp. 63-65).

The whole building industry was in the hand of the private sector, and these investors, in view of better gains, would build houses solely for the middle and upper classes<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed account see Insolera, I. (2001) **Roma moderna**. pp. 52-62 and Insolera, I. (2002b) **Roma. Immagini e realtà dal X al XX secolo**. pp. 373 and 388.

<sup>11</sup> We have to wait the year 1907 to see the construction of Testaccio, one of the first popular neighbourhood in Rome.

In the while, the 1911 census registers the growing number of the first informal dwellings in town (Insolera, 2001, p. 72).

From the first official City Plan of 1873 and that of 1911, the features of Rome as a city of parks and luxurious villas changes dramatically, and with the creation of new economical fortunes we witness also the huge expansion of the city territory and the progressively increasing number of poor and unemployed people.

During the 1920's the forced evictions of historical residents from the inner city reaches its peak. The trend was to build popular enclaves along the Consular Roads, on lesser value allotments, while the centre and the other more valuable areas were destined to upper classes.

The city's development was chaotic, irrational and dominated by the particular interests produced by the compenetration of the local clerical economical groups and the national capitalistic bourgeoisie (Insolera, 2001, p. 83). Meanwhile the process of building and destroying continues incessantly in spite of any law and or regulation.

With the rise of the fascist dictatorship in 1922, things became even worse for the eternal city.

The construction of the capital of the new fascist empire requested the sacrifice of more and more important artifacts from the past. Buildings, and even entire neighbourhoods from the middle age, renaissance, baroc and rococo period, were systematically destroyed in order to re-create artificially what the fascist archaeologists thought to be the "real" imperial Rome.

The list of destructions is tragically long<sup>12</sup>, and composes a tragic picture with the forced eviction of thousands of Roman families that from the centre neighbourhoods

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<sup>12</sup> On the destructions operated by fascist urban planners and architects such as Marcello Piacentini, Antonio Munoz, Gustavo Giovannoni, Attilio Spaccarelli and others, see the important book of Cederna,



were deported into newly formed suburbs, the so called “*borgate*”<sup>13</sup>, while the less fortunate will find a shelter building shanty towns.

Many of these evictions have been documented in the propagandistic films by the Istituto Luce which is now with its archives one of the most important resources for research about the visual history of modern and contemporary Rome<sup>14</sup>.

The data concerning the destruction, between 1936 and 1950, of the “*spina di Borgo*” to create the present via della Conciliazione can give us an idea of the proportion of this urbanistic and demographic disaster:

‘... 142 properties expropriated, equal to 6.000 cadastral embrasures, for a total volume of 555.000 cubic metres and 43.000 square metres of area, 20.000 of which destined as streets, squares and re-edifications. On the whole 729 apartments have been destroyed, and 1.236 families, composed by 4.992 persons have been evicted. A third of the population of the former Borgo ...’. (Cederna, 1979, p.75)

Simultaneously to the destructions of entire neighbourhoods in the historical centre, were the growth of informal buildings and shanty towns, which is the other side of the already mentioned building anarchy.

The war, with its destructions, worsened the situation. Rome was relatively spared by the allied bombings<sup>15</sup>, but this attracted more and more refugees from the Southern regions and from the surroundings.

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A. (1979) **Mussolini urbanista. Lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso**. Bari: Laterza, and the rich visual documentation in Insolera, I. (2002a) **Roma fascista**. Roma: Editori Riuniti.

<sup>13</sup> ‘... The term “*borgate*” has been used for the first time in 1924 when the village of Acilia was built, in a malaric area 15 km. from Rome where the inhabitants of the area of the Caesar and Traianum Forum were transferred ...’. (Insolera, 2001, p. 135).

<sup>14</sup> On the evictions from the inner city to the *Borgate* see the following material from the Archives of the Istituto Luce: *Giornale Luce* s.n.1934: Il Principe Boncompagni Ludovisi inaugura la casa dei bambini nel gruppo di costruzioni gratuite per i senza tetto cacciati dalle baracche; *Giornale Luce* B0931: Lavori di risanamento e demolizione nel quartiere rinascimentale di Roma. 05/08/1936; *Giornale Luce* B1205: “Assegnazione delle case popolari a Tiburtino III”.

<sup>15</sup> The exception is constituted by the tragic allied aerial bombing in July 1943 on the Roman neighbourhood of S. Lorenzo, as witnessed by members of my family that were living there and were forced to move out as a consequence of the allied bombing.

Actually the fascist urbanistic model continued in the guidelines inaugurated in the years after the Unity, it was a system based essentially on the systematic expulsion of popular classes from the luxury urbanistic areas like the centre town.

Contemporaneously to this, all around the city's perimeter grew quickly both the *Borgate*, and shanty towns (*Borghetti*).

The IACP (Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari - Institute for Popular Housing) registered that: '... in 1920 [there were] 5.685 persons living in huts and temporary and informal shelters, in 1924 their number rose to 8.325 and in 1933 they were 15.000' (Cederna, 1979, p. 165).

The population that inhabited the new shanty towns was composed of displaced locals evicted from their former dwellings, former peasants that moved to town in search of a wage opportunity as a *manovale* (unskilled building industry labourer). The building fever was at its peak, and there were many opportunities to work in the building sector.

The following years saw an explosion of the "borgate". These neighbourhoods were far away from the inner city, made of cheaply built houses, isolated in the suburbs with insufficient or nonexistent infrastructures, and afflicted by chronic poverty, high rates of unemployment and high density urban population.

The massive migration from the countryside and the southern Italy increased the city's population but this has never produced an adequate political and social intervention, therefore people continued to settle where and how they can, in huts and caves, even in the ruined Roman aqueducts, as in the case of the famous shanty town of the "Acquedotto Felice".

Between the 30's and the 60's Rome's residents doubled their number: from 1.155.722 in 1935 to 1.651.754 for the year 1951 up to the 2.000.000 reached in the 60's (Seronde

Babonaux, 1983). The housing problem continued to be a constant factor, and included in this was the number of informal dwellings in town.

The 1951 census registered that 6,6% of the resident Roman population lived in huts, caves and abandoned ruins, while 21,9% lived in cohabitation with other familiar groups. The Municipality Commission created in 1957 and dedicated to the “Study of the housing problem for the inhabitants of the caves, archaeological ruins and huts” registered more than 60.000 people living in informal dwellings, although their number was surely underestimated<sup>16</sup>.

As Insolera points out:

‘... very much below the residential housing, hygienical, social and economical levels which characterises the aspects and the organisation of a modern city, in Rome are chronically living a more or less big mass of destituted persons. ... The shanty towns and huts continue to disappear only to give way to houses where no one of the informal dwellers will never live, and the huts will reappear just a few kilometers away’ (Insolera, 2001, pp. 198-199).

During the late 60’s and the 70’s, the population of the various Roman shanty towns started to attract the attention of social scientists too. During the 70’s, under the guidance of the sociologist Franco Ferrarotti, researchers collected data and produced several studies on some of the historical Roman *baraccopoli*<sup>17</sup>: Valle Aurelia, Acquedotto Felice, Trullo, Borghetto Prenestino, Borgata Gordiani, Vigna Mangani and Pietralata.

The determination of both politicians and institutions to put an end to the destitute condition of living in the *borghetti* and *baraccopoli* supplemented the efforts of leftist

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<sup>16</sup> Comune di Roma (1957) **Commissione Consiliare per lo studio del problema della casa per gli abitanti delle grotte, dei ruderi e delle baracche**, Roma. The Report registered 13.703 families composed of 54.576 persons and divided into 28 informal dwellings, 24 “*borghetti*” and 356 nucleus and conglomerates of huts.

<sup>17</sup> Roman informal dwellings cannot be defined as *bidonvilles*, since they were built out of bricks, mud and wood. Actually they were self built homes. The term *baraccopoli* could therefore be translated into English only with a neologism such as “*Hutville*” (*baracca*, hut).

movement such as the “Movimento di lotta per la casa”<sup>18</sup>. This led to actions to alleviate, and hopefully solve, the problem.

During the decade 1970-1980 the Municipality of Rome built more popular housing all around the city’s periphery, in all directions. It seemed that the history of the informal dwellings in Rome has finally come to an end.

The left-wing Municipality administration of the time, led by the Mayor Luigi Petroselli<sup>19</sup>, undertook the task of getting rid of the *Borghetti*, giving access to popular housing (built in great number at the time) for the first time also to the Italian Roma, who as any other Italian citizen, had a right to access to the popular housing lists.

#### **4.1.2 The newcomers**

During the whole 80’s the number of Romans living in informal dwellings finally decreased, but the same decade saw Italy facing a new phenomenon: the country of emigration started to become a destination for international immigration, invested, like many other European countries, by the global migration wave.

In 1990, under the guidance of my mentor Prof. Roberto De Angelis, during the training fieldwork for my Social Anthropology BA Course, I had the possibility of visiting and do research in nearly all the immigrants informal dwellings existing at that times in Rome<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> The “Movimento di lotta per la casa” was a communist movement devoted to the defense of evicted families and individuals. It has provided defense and practical help until today. See: Daolio, A. (ed.) (1974) **Le lotte per la casa in Italia**. Milano: Feltrinelli.

<sup>19</sup> Luigi Petroselli (1932-1981) is still remembered today with esteem and affection and as an *exempla* of a Public Administrator for his commitment and for the improvements made in the field of social assistance, urban planning, urban transport etc.

<sup>20</sup> *Garbatana*, close to the old Fruit Market and inhabited by Tunisians and Moroccans, the *Clinica delle Rose*, with its Tunisians hosts; the *Cancello*, home to the Moroccans, the one of *Corviale*, inhabited mostly by south Americans, the *hotel Africa*, inhabited by Somalians, Nigerians and other central African migrants and many others, so small and short lived, that they did not even have a name.

The first and most important has been that of the former *pasta* factory of the “Pantanella”, the first immigrant dwelling in Rome, whose residents were then evicted in the winter of the year 1990.

Defunct factories and abandoned warehouses and buildings became informal shelters for a population that for many concurrent reasons (first of all that of citizenship) could have not gained access to the public lists for a popular house.

Some other migrant occupied the places left by Romans<sup>21</sup> in the old historical *borghetti*, like in the case of the former Borghetto Prenestino, later known as Douar Bailill and described here in par. 6.1

The high rent prices<sup>22</sup>, the lack of documents, and in many cases the Italian prejudices against the idea of renting a house to foreign immigrants acted as excluding factors in the access to regular housing.

Nonetheless, with the following years, many immigrants succeeded in regularising their position and therefore in renting a house<sup>23</sup>, although it still remained a problem for the ones recently arrived.

In these years many informal dwellings were erected, then evacuated, destroyed and built again somewhere else by different people of different nationality. While during the 1980's the housing emergency affected immigrants from northern and central Africa and Balkanic countries (mostly Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania), the years since 2000 have seen the increasing number of presences of immigrants coming from eastern European countries, in particular Romanians, who are at the moment (2008-

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<sup>21</sup> More often than not those huts have been sold by Italians to immigrants.

<sup>22</sup> The tenant is normally obliged to pay three months rent in advance as a guarantee. Therefore the initial amount for the rent is very much above the tenant's possibilities.

<sup>23</sup> Many of the oldest residents have finally gained access to the popular houses list, like in the case of the 12 Moroccan familiar groups who were living in a squatted abandoned building in Ostia and who now have a proper home.

2009) the first immigrant group in Rome by numerical consistence. It is during the decade 1990 - 2000 that we assist to the growth of the Roma's informal encampments<sup>24</sup>. In the years 2000 - 2002 their number was of 54, (after 2002 this number was reduced to 24<sup>25</sup>), made by the Municipality itself out of small prefabricated houses of the kind normally used for emergencies such as earthquakes etc.

Although informal dwellings and housing has been a constant trademark in the city's development there have been big changes which have intervened through the years.

The former shanty towns (the already mentioned *Borghetti*) and the self built homes of the *Borghetti* were not in any aspect similar to the ones we can see nowadays in Rome occupied by Roma and small migrant communities.

The differences include both morphological and social aspects.

The post war *Borghetti* were inhabited by poor and destitute Italian internal migrants, but this class of people was already or was soon to enter into the job market. Although poor, they could rely on two important help: the then rising welfare state, that sooner or later would provide them a home in the popular housing system, and the peculiar economic phase of the 1960's the so called Italian economic boom, which gave an unprecedented opening in the job market.

Italy was a very different country at the time, the transition from rural to industrial economy was just beginning and the explosion of the tertiary sector was still yet to come.

The self built homes of the *Borghetti* were made of bricks, wood and metal. The presence of small orchards and small domestic animals for daily consumption witnessed

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<sup>24</sup> Being foreigner, this group of Roma could not have access to popular housing as it has been the case of the Italian ones under the aforementioned Petroselli City's Government (see previous paragraph and note 19 here).

<sup>25</sup> Data concerning the Roma presences in Rome varies significantly from one administration to the other. This issue will be discussed in par. 4.3.2.

a status of relative wealth and the rural origins of its inhabitants. In spite of the difficult life conditions, dwellers knew that their situation was going to be transitory and that sooner or later, they would have been absorbed into the job market. The morphology is therefore totally different from the third world bidonvilles and *desokotas* described by Mike Davis (Davis, 2006, p. 33). Although there is one factor that all the bidonvilles of the world have in common, and that is their huge capacity as human mines for cheap and desperate labour force (Davis, 2006, p. 59).

And indeed, this is the case of the Moroccan part of the encampment that will be described further on in Chapter Six.

For Roma the general basic conditions are totally different. Their situation represents a peculiarity which can not by any means be compared with that of any other group in Italy. Their possibility of having access to regular occupations and salaries are scarce. The strength of the prejudices toward this group is so rooted that in all the years of my experience within this group I can quote only very few examples of effective working integration, and in the few cases where this has happened, the work was always within NGO's or volunteers organisations. Roma therefore works almost exclusively in the area of informal self enterprises.

All around and into the Roma "hutvilles" flourished the economy of the informal.

In former times traditional economic activities of the Xoraxanè group were that of copper workers, horse merchants and farriers. In present times these kinds of jobs are practically valueless, and during the last century Roma were forced to modernise their activities becoming professional recyclers.

Of the Roma group residing in Rome only the Kalderasha found a way to continue their traditional original activities. They have stipulated an agreement with the Churches of

Rome, based on which they have to clean and repair any metal object or artifacts used in churches, this activity has been carried on by Kalderasha since forty years and has more recently extended to the cleaning of Restaurant cooking pots. Another activity is that of “*cavallari*”<sup>26</sup> and horse dealers. In this capacity many Roma belonging to this group have participated as actors in many of the B Movies produced in Rome during the 1960’s<sup>27</sup>. This of the Kalderasha is unfortunately a unique case, the large majority of the other Roma groups, especially the eastern Europeans, are working in the gathering - recycling sector.

#### **4.2 The land of informality: Labour market in Italy**

In the previous paragraph I have described two important ground aspects of Rome’s historical relation to informality in both housing and economy, but through the years the social change dynamics have invested also other aspects producing structural changes that need to be clarified before proceeding further on.

As we have seen, informal housing, and informality generally, has always been a peculiar constant in Rome’s history<sup>28</sup>. It is very difficult to explain the reasons why the capital of one of the most industrialised countries can allow people to live in shanty towns and slums. France has also had its informal dwelling for Maghrebi immigrants, but during the 1970’s they had all been cleared and replaced by popular public housing. The United Kingdom has never had any of these situations, not even in the “Hard

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<sup>26</sup> The *Cavallaro* (m.sing., *cavallari*, m.plural)) in Roman dialect is any person who works with horses.

<sup>27</sup> Mostly the so called “Western Spaghetti” and other films on Romans and Greeks that were popular at that times.

<sup>28</sup> See Ferrarotti, F. (1979) **Roma da capitale a periferia**. Bari: Laterza and Ferrarotti, F. (1974) **Vite di baraccati**. Napoli: Liguori.



Times” that Dickens described<sup>29</sup>. The welfare state in Italy is weak, and the general conditions cannot be compared with the two countries quoted above.

Suffices here to say that if an employee loses his job (unless is working for a big national company with more than 15 employees or for an international corporation) does not get any help neither from the employer, nor from the State’s Social Services. In Italy we do not have a solidly built welfare system such as the one existing in northern European countries, therefore young and old unemployed, redundant workers, single mothers and other so called “weak categories” are very much left to themselves to cope with their ongoing situations.

Here lies one of the reasons for the huge percentages of shadow economy in the form of both illegal and informal sector activity which historically afflicts Italy and which amazes and scares the international expert who evaluates periodically the state of our national economy.

In Italy, the phenomenon of the shadow economy, (a term which includes informal and illegal jobs), has worrying dimensions and has been a matter of concern for international agencies such as the OECD and the IMF.

A report from the IMF stated that:

‘... In the 21 OECD countries in 1999–2001, Greece and Italy had the largest shadow economies, at 30 percent and 27 percent of GDP, respectively. (...) In some individual countries, the shadow economy labor force was very large: in Italy, 30–48 percent of the total labor force ...’ (Schneider and Enste, 2002)<sup>30</sup>.

Informal economies have been and are still considered as an economy of the margin, but when we consider how big a part of the world population relies on informal economic

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<sup>29</sup> Dickens, C. (2003) **Hard Times**. London: Penguin Popular Classics.

<sup>30</sup> See also: OECD (2004) **Employment Outlook 2004**. Chapter 5, Annexes 1 and 2 to “Informal Employment and Promoting the Transition to a Salaried Economy”. These figures also include the enormous profits realised by Italian traditional criminal organisations such as the Mafia, the Camorra, the ‘Ndrangheta and the Stidda.

activities, then we can reconsider whether is it proper to call them marginal, since the phenomenon, as Shanin pointed out, appears to be not marginal at all<sup>31</sup>:

‘I remember going to Italy in the 1980’s, when Italy and Britain both had very high rates of unemployment. But while I saw the unemployed everywhere in northern cities in England, in Italy I could not find them. Everyone was employed doing something, in hundreds of very informal ways. Much of it I don’t suppose the taxman knew about. The informal economy is global. In some places it becomes the black economy, and merges into criminality. But often is perfectly legal; just people working with family and friends to get by’ (Shanin, 2002, p. 44).

For what concern the specific migrant condition, it must be remembered that both agricultural and unskilled labour are often seasonal, short term and temporary, and this often becomes synonym with underemployment.

As Labib pointed out:

‘... La précarité réduit les capacités d’épargne des migrants et, par conséquent, les transferts d’argent à leur famille restée au Maghreb. Elle ne permet pas l’intégration sociale puisque les regroupements familiaux sont subordonnés à l’existence d’un logement “adéquat” et d’un revenu “garanti” ...’ (Labib, 1996, pp. 29-30).

The kind of works which are related with the building industry, are inherently intermittent, because workers are employed generally only for the period of time necessary to complete the building in question.

This occupation was once accomplished by the internal migration, but now is one of the most widespread activity in which migrants are employed.

A research conducted in 2004 by one of the Italian Trade Unions (Dossier FILLEA-CGIL, 2004, p. 8) and dedicated to the analysis of the migrant’s working condition in the building industry sector showed worrying data: approximately 10.000 foreign

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<sup>31</sup> On the world of informal economy and its importance see the extensive ethnographic works of French scholar Serge Latouche, and in particular: Latouche, S. (1998) **L’autre Afrique. Entre don et marché**. Paris: Albin Michel.

workers were employed as builders, and an identical number was estimated to be working completely informally and therefore outside every regulation and law.

One data, reported in the same research speaks for all, and gives us an idea of the dimension of this sector: 94% of the immigrant building workers had to pay for themselves the costs of the regularisation<sup>32</sup>, while only in the 6% of the cases examined these contributions have been effectively paid by the company.

It is a shadowy world in which activities of monitoring and control are very difficult. In particular, the Italian laws on occupation, foresees distinctions of treatment for companies with more or with less than 15 employees<sup>33</sup>.

The ones with less than 15 employees are for example devoid of any Trade Union representatives, the controls are largely left to self declarations, leaving room to any kind of mismanagement and even open violation of the current laws. Italy's number of deaths, mutilations and serious injuries at working places is one of the highest in Europe, as shown in the graphic below:

*Tab. 4.1: Italy. Deadly labour accidents reported to INAIL 2004-2005.*

Typology of accident	Agriculture		Industry and Services		Civil Servants		Total	
	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
At the workplace	157	126	863	865	7	9	1027	1000
On the way to work	18	14	274	260	9	6	301	280
Total deadly accidents	175	140	1.137	1.125	16	15	1.328	1.280

Source: INAIL Report 2005.

<sup>32</sup> This includes all the paper and stamps necessary for the permit of stay as a worker, then there are the taxes to be paid, insurance and health (*contributi INAIL*) and pensions contributions (*contributi INPS*). All these expenses should be paid by the employer, as the data shows, this is a very rarely fulfilled condition.

<sup>33</sup> These small enterprises for example, do not have a union representative. For this reason it is also more difficult to oppose against dismissal without notice since these company do not fall under the regulations of the Art.18 of the Workers Bill.

These conditions afflicts also the Italians working in the same sector of activity, but these workers, differently from the Italian ones, are most vulnerable because of their condition of foreigners therefore often are forced to accept irregular conditions (especially if they are not in possession of a permit of stay) because of the fear of losing their job or being expelled from the country. Irregular and clandestine workers are subjected to the blackmail offer of accepting these conditions or face unemployment.

In Rome, at present days, it is possible to witness this working class tragedy every morning, early at 5.00 AM, in front of any of the numerous *smorzi*<sup>34</sup> of the Roman periphery, large groups of north Africans and eastern Europeans, waving a piece of paper with written on it: 30 Euro.

To this we must add the plague of the *caporalato*. The *caporali* are a sort of informal intermediary between the employee and the employers. It is him who decides who will work and when, and for this intermediation he charges a fee from each one of “his” workers. In the agricultural sector especially these *caporali* also provide their victim a place to sleep and the transport from the “house” to the place of work, obviously for a price<sup>35</sup>.

Another aspect of this shadow economy, is that related to the petty ambulant commerce. The Italian laws regulate the ambulant trade sector with various norms of which the most important are firstly the commerce license and then the application, submitted at

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<sup>34</sup> *Smorzo* (m.s. pl. *smorzi*) is the common word in Roman dialect to define a place (generally a yard) where builders can buy cement, chalk, bricks and any other refurnishment for the building industry. The bigger ones are situated in Via Palmiro Togliatti, one of the roads very close to the encampment object of this dissertation.

<sup>35</sup> The conditions of semi-slavery of the immigrants working in the agricultural sector has been documented in a dossier published by the Italian magazine L'Espresso. Gatti, F. (2006) Io schiavo in Puglia. **L'Espresso**, 1 Sep. [online]. Available in the English version from: <http://espresso.repubblica.it/dettaglio/Io%20schiavo%20in%20Puglia/1370307&ref=hpstr1>. The author, disguised as a Romanian immigrant lived and worked for a month in a farm in the south of Italy and the results were shocking.

the local council, with the request to occupy a designated space in one of the markets of the *Municipi*.

Ambulant and petty trade has always been a resource for the many destitute people who arrived and lived in Rome.

Although it is a totally informal activity it nonetheless offers a mean of income, especially for the newly arrived migrants.

During the summer season, Lazio's beach are scoured by east Indians (notably Bangladeshi) selling silver jewellery and cold drinks; north Africans (mostly Moroccans), selling dresses and other garments, and central Africans, selling musical CD, sunglasses, African handcrafts and various other goods.

The offer of such goods is much appreciated by locals, who have in this way the occasion to indulge to the activity of shopping and bargaining, but for migrants there is always the risk of being caught by Police and have all the goods seized.

Summarising, we can state that a widespread informality on both housing and economy levels is, and has always been, a very common and peculiar trait in Rome's social history.

This subterranean and parallel shadow economy on one side condemns Italy to the status of untrustworthy country when compared with European standards<sup>36</sup>, but on the other side it has the value of offering a chance of survival for the weakest part of society (immigrants and Roma, but also for example Italian poors, and former prison inmates<sup>37</sup>).

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<sup>36</sup> See the opinions expressed by experts in the OECD Report already quoted here in note 30.

<sup>37</sup> Traditionally in Rome the sale of watermelon slices in small kiosks (*cocomeraro* in Roman dialect) along the roads is an activity practiced almost exclusively by former convicts.

The importance of the local-informal economies has been extensively studied by important scholars such as Samir Amin and, more recently, by Serge Latouche<sup>38</sup>.

In particular Latouche with his stimulating works on what he calls “*economie vernaculaire*” depicts a very pertinent image of the vitality and the widespread diffusion of this economic bricolage.

Of course it is not possible to literally transport the model described by Latouche and referring to African markets, to the models at work in Southern European countries such as Italy, but the suggestion is fertile, and it can be used to better investigate and to foresee social insurgent phenomena, instead of getting regularly surprised by them.

Data presented on the 2005 National Dossier on Immigration, shows that the degree of general education in the migrant population, especially for what concern higher education, is superior to that of the Italian citizens, as shown in the Table 4.2 below:

*Tab. 4. 2: Italy. Degrees of literacy of the Italian and foreign population.*

	<b>University Degree</b>	<b>Lyceum</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Literates</b>	<b>Illiterates</b>	<b>Total</b>
Foreigners	12,1	27,8	32,9	12,6	12,1	2,5	100,00
Italians	7,5	25,9	30,1	25,4	9,7	1,5	100,00

Source: Dossier Caritas, 2005. Elaborations on ISTAT Data based on the 2001 population census.

Other data concern the housing conditions. The second Italian Report on Migrants Integration estimates that 3% of foreign migrants experiments extremely precarious housing conditions (i.e. forced cohabitations, unhealthy houses, overcrowding etc.). Such conditions involve between 40.000 and 50.000 persons<sup>39</sup>.

These last ten years also witnessed an increase in the phenomena of illegal and undocumented migrations. In an effort to try to regularise and control this large number

<sup>38</sup> Latouche, S. (1998) **L'autre Afrique. Entre don et marché**. Paris: Albin Michel, pp. 157 and ff.

<sup>39</sup> Commissione per le politiche di integrazione degli immigrati (2000) **Secondo Rapporto sull'integrazione degli immigrati in Italia**. Rome.

of undocumented workers, the Italian government has been compelled to release a series of amnesties (*sanatoria*), granting legal status to the migrants already present in the Italian territory by mean of periodical regularisation campaigns.

Like other Schengen countries, also the Italian Government establishes every year, through the system of quotas, the number of foreigners who can apply for a permit of stay, and this number should correspond to the requests and the needs of our internal job market<sup>40</sup>. The system constitutes an attempt to control and regulate the migration flows, but due to diverse factors (not least Italy's geographical position) the mission of "restoring order" at our borders and coasts remains largely unaccomplished. The number of real repatriations is very low. In most cases the sole expulsion order is issued, and more often than not, the person object to the proceeding does not comply.

Italy's Immigration Law<sup>41</sup> foresees that the employer, using the quotas system, requests *nominally* one or more foreign workers to be employed in his company. Because it is actually impossible that a nominal call can be made toward a person that is *de facto* unknown, the reality of this Law's application is in truth very different.

What actually happens is that the foreign worker arrives clandestinely (or with a tourist visa) in Italy and finds a job (an irregular one) with an Italian employer. In the meanwhile, when immigration quotas are released, the employer at that moment applies for a nominal request for the foreign employee. The employee goes back (once more clandestinely) to his country, and re enters Italy after being added to the aforementioned quotas.

This Law, strongly wanted and supported by the Italian right wing parties, has in the end become not a means to limit and prevent clandestine migration, but quite the

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<sup>40</sup> In this quotas are included also Permits of Entry to Refugees, for familial reunions and for Humanitarian reasons.

<sup>41</sup> L.189/2002, the so-called: Bossi - Fini, by the names of the MP's who promoted it.

contrary, an official way of favouring it. Besides, the collateral effects of this legislative act are that of nurturing the growth of other important elements also related to it, and that are his obvious corollaries: irregular jobs, and tax evasion

In the Table below are reported data concerning the refusals of entry, expulsion proceedings and repatriations, as visible, the number of non complying is considerable.

In total invisibility, and out of reach from every institutional help, these people can carry on with their lives, remaining in this condition even for years, working illegally for an employer, or either dispersed into one of the many informal activities in which also Italians are involved.

*Tab. 4.3: Italy. Refusals of entry, expulsions and repatriations (1999 - 2005).*

	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Refusals of Entry (at borders)	48.437	42.221	41.058	43.795	27.397	24.528	23.878
Expelled - Repatriated	23.955	23.836	34.390	44.706	37.756	35.437	26.985
Tot. Persons	72.392	66.057	75.448	88.501	65.153	59.965	50.863
Non complying	40.489	64.734	58.207	61.282	40.586	45.697	65.617
Total involved	112.881	130.791	133.655	149.783	105.739	105.662	116.480
%	64,1	50,5	56,4	59,1	61,6	56,8	43,7

Source: Elaboration Caritas/Migrantes, Immigration Statistical Dossier on Data released by the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In spite of the boasting declarations made by various politicians and members of the right wing such as the North Liga (who even proposed to attack the immigrants boats and send them back with the use of force), this undocumented and invisible human flow happens to be very useful to the little employers of the small scale Italian industries. Many of them are more than happy to have employees who can easily be blackmailed,



and that due to their condition of clandestinity are obviously afraid of any possible encounter with the law.

At this point we have to analyse more in-depth another very important aspect of migrations to Italy, to which we have only hinted before, the occupational one.

I have already pointed out elsewhere the peculiarity represented in Europe by the Italian situation in relation to black and informal jobs<sup>42</sup>.

The Table below shows the incidence of irregular migrations in small and medium sized companies in Italy. Although limited to the number of companies surveyed, it can give us an approximate idea of the phenomenon's consistency.

*Tab. 4.4: Italy. Irregular migration in the findings of companies inspections (2000 - 2005).*

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Companies Surveyed	25.742	24.591	21.572	23.341	26.256	24.555
Foreigners at work	11.172	12.186	12.444	21.031	24.720	23.449
-of whom irregulars	4.612	4.808	3.975	4.154	4.863	5.943
- of whom clandestine	3.046	2.664	2.223	1.159	2.596	3.043
- % of irregulars	41,3	39,5	31,9	19,8	19,7	25,3
- % of clandestine	27,3	21,9	17,9	5,5	10,5	12,9

Source: Elaboration Caritas/Migrantes Immigration Statistical Dossier on Data released by the Italian Ministry of Occupation/Nucleo Carabinieri - Ispettorato Generale del Lavoro.

I can only imagine how this data must appear surprising to anyone who is not familiar with this “Italian model”, but what this data also shows, is that irregularity seems to be a very convenient conditions for employers. If it would not have been convenient, the number of the employers who risk sanctions for employing undocumented workers should be much less than what this Table indicates.

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<sup>42</sup> See par. 2.3.

Furthermore the kind of occupational sectors where foreign workers are employed, are often the most difficult to control.

Migrant labour force is mostly employed in services, for example in the role of carers or as housemaids. The care of elders in Italy has traditionally been one of the duties expected from sons, and especially and more effectively from daughters, wives and mother in laws. But the demographic changes that are affecting the Italian population, coupled with the fact that familiar roles have changed, have deeply altered this scheme, creating a demand for carers that is new for the Italian context. Many migrants therefore, occupy this position.

Other foreign workers, find employment in many other unqualified jobs, either in the small industries (mostly in the north) or in the building industry (as in the case of central Italy, and more specifically Rome) and in the agricultural one (mainly in the south).

Another sector worth of being considered, is the one connected with deviant and criminal activities which constitutes also an important part of the informal area<sup>43</sup>.

During the last five years there has also been a notable increment in the number of entrepreneurs with foreign citizenship. Data published by the National Confederation for the Craft Sector and Small and Medium Enterprise in Italy (CNA) and reported in the 2006 Caritas Statistical Dossier on Immigration, shows that foreign entrepreneurs who are officially registered to the CNA are 130.969, i.e. 38% more than in 2005.

From the Table 4.5 we can see this data disaggregated according to the country of origin. Moroccan citizens are the biggest group, accounting for 18,4 % of the total.

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<sup>43</sup> See par. 4.2 note 30.

Tab. 4.5: Italy. Entrepreneurs with foreign citizenship by country of origin (Data regards only the first 20 Communities, 30/06/2006).

Country	Number	% on the total	Country	Number	% on the total
Morocco	24.055	18,4	Peru	1.619	1,2
China	18.205	13,9	Bosnia	1.246	1,0
Albania	13.511	10,3	Brazil	1.214	0,9
Romania	12.625	9,6	Ecuador	1.008	0,8
Senegal	8.202	6,3	Moldova	992	0,8
Tunisia	5.949	4,5	Algeria	962	0,7
Egypt	5.854	4,5	Ukraine	915	0,7
Bangladesh	4.041	3,1	Turkey	907	0,7
Serbia Mont.	3.362	2,6	<i>First twenty</i>	113.193	86,4
Nigeria	3.064	2,3	<i>Others</i>	17.776	13,6
Pakistan	2.915	2,2	Macedonia	2.547	1,9
			<b>Total</b>	130.969	100,0

Source: Dossier Caritas 2006. Elaboration on CNA data.

But the situation during the last ten years has changed. The increase we have seen in family reunions, and the data on the steady growth of foreign presence tells us that somehow, someway, Italy continues to be a place of attraction for many immigrant workers.

The observations of Shanin on the Italian situation are very important and must be taken into serious consideration. The informal sector in Italy is well established and flourishing. Its historical, widespread presence cannot be denied and must be dealt with in a pragmatic perspective.

The welfare state (although completely absent when compared to northern European countries) the way our fathers and grandfathers knew it, is going toward a systematic and progressive erosion and extinction. Besides, from the occupational point of view, we are also facing important changes; precarious and intermittent jobs that were before solely concerning consultancy jobs, became normal and widely used in nearly all the production sectors, from industries to services.

Both official statistic data, and on a more small scale, the ones coming from my fieldwork, confirms that this subterranean system provides nonetheless the possibility for many men and women to carry out a living, while these invisibles, although real jobs, anyway offers them a chance to start their migratory project.

In Britain, Germany, Scandinavian countries, it is impossible to build your own small hut and practise your ambulant trade as an undocumented migrant. This happens because there is a much solidly built welfare that in spite of the attacks to which it has been subjected in the last ten-twenty years even in these nations, it nonetheless foresees and guarantees social security, access to social housing, and enrolment in occupation lists that actually work. In exchange for this, the migrant is asked to contribute with his work, paying taxes, and generally modelling his economic behaviour on the one of the host country. The institutions demand that the process of integration follows all the requested steps.

What then possibly can be the reason that attracts so many dreamers of a successful life to such a chaotic country like Italy? An *exempla* of informality even according to the World Bank? In my opinion, the ultimate push factor is represented by the fact that this country allows a “freedom of action” that has no equal in the European panorama. The person who arrives here, even undocumented, can run his/her own activity, even for years, without having to report it to anyone, but just using some survival skills to avoid the scarce controls. One episode, on a micro-sociological level, will make clearer this point. I do not report it for a love for anecdotes, but because it represents a clear example of what is presently a very common experience for many foreigners.

One girl from Nigeria, L., that I have met during another research, arrived in Rome and overstayed her touristic visa. Then, in complete invisibility, she worked for five years as

a prostitute<sup>44</sup> and accumulated some money. After this period of “primary accumulation”, she succeeded in opening a small Bar for the Nigerian community in the southern periphery of Rome<sup>45</sup>. From 1999 when she arrived and I had met her, until present days (2009), she has never had a permit of stay and is going to regularise herself only this year by mean of leaving Italy (passing the frontier illegally at Chiasso on foot) and then re-entering after being requested<sup>46</sup> thus becoming one of the 170.000 migrant workers that the 2009 year’s quotas allowed. From 2004 to 2009 nobody (except customers) ever entered her Bar or controlled it. Only once, when City Police were around, she closed the shop down and they did not take any notice of it. For three years, L. has been able to live and engage in her small commercial activity without incurring in any form of control, let alone sanctions. During these years she has also been able to send money back to Nigeria on a regular basis, allowing her family to have an economic help.

I want to state clearly that this does not mean that we have to agree or share such uncertain perspectives or take them for granted, but surely their importance cannot be ignored anymore. The extent and the quality of the social capital involved into these activities are impressive and numerically relevant. According to me, it can be considered as a fertile starting point for innovative policy making. The task is to guarantee to these large parts of the population a visibility, granting first of all citizenship rights and the support of a legislation that takes into account these objective data not in a rhetorical way. By which means and in which way these actions should be planned and put into practise, will be discussed in the last chapter of this work.

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<sup>44</sup> Prostitution is legal in Italy, although other crimes with it connected, such as “obscene acts in public places” are condemned.

<sup>45</sup> The Bar was placed at road level, and had no authorization of any kind (health, safety, taxes, etc.).

<sup>46</sup> The foreign worker has to demonstrate that there is a direct employer’s request for him/her.

### **4.3 Other peculiarities of the Italian anomaly: the Italian migratory model**

Ethnic Relations are representing in today's almost globally multiethnic societies one of the most useful and fertile field of studies.

The questions they pose to social scientists and policy makers, apart from the purely theoretical approaches, all focus on the possible interventions to dedicate to these new societies.

In this border field, different competencies and abilities meets and intersecate: sociologists and anthropologists, human geographers and urbanists, policy makers and the vast world of the NGO's and statutory bodies members. Institutions are entrusted with the practical governance of both immigrant and resident minority groups, and this delicate issue requires the activation of a process of reciprocal confrontation and mutual cultural exchanges between the scientific community and the whole *corpus* of national, local institutions and the private sector.

In countries like Italy, where this study took place, and which only recently became the destination of migratory flows, there is a great distance separating the academic debate on integration and ethnic relations and the ideas that institutions and statutory bodies have on these topics.

These two worlds rarely communicate to each other, and even in the case when they manage to build a dialogic relationship, in the end institutions often chooses not to take into any account the advices and recommendations that the experts have produced<sup>47</sup>. Collaboration among the two remains therefore basically at a formal level, in which the academy is involved only as a consultative body whose advices are first requested, and then ignored.

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<sup>47</sup> It is the case for example, of the institutional interventions on Roma which will be discussed and analysed in detail in Chapter Seven.

The approaches on the social policies level, are therefore very much far beyond when compared with the United Kingdom or France, that due to their colonial past have dealt with this theme for at least a century earlier.

The Italian case represents a very interesting and peculiar situation. The law which for the first time dealt with the immigration processes goes back to the '90's<sup>48</sup>. Twenty years after its promulgation, Italy still lacks a frame statute on immigration, and for this reason the governance of migration is subjected to sudden changes, and to continuous integrations and add-ons.

Social policies are indicators of a nation's attitude toward its citizens, and these policies include also the management of welcoming and integration practices of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

In Italy actually, policies toward refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities oscillates between a generic multiculturalist approach and open policies of apartheid and repression.

The generically multiculturalist approach has guaranteed in Italy health care and schooling also to irregulars, in a "citizenship rights for all" perspective, that is also one of the grounding elements of our Constitution<sup>49</sup>. On the other hand the same Italy allows young undocumented migrants and Roma to be enrolled in schools, and then prevents them to obtain the final schools diploma on the base that they are not regular residents. Another case of this attitude is for example the assumption that Roma were all practicing nomadism, and which led to the construction of the encampments. This supposed "respect" for cultural diversities, far from realising any improvement for Roma, has instead became the occasion for building places of segregation and apartheid

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<sup>48</sup> L. 28/02/1990 n.39

<sup>49</sup> Italian Constitution, Art.3.

for a population that stopped practicing nomadism around the XIVth century.

This dissertation does not intend to offer a theoretical in-depth analysis of the different approaches and national politics, however, it is necessary to give at least a hint of the diverse models adopted by other nation states, in order to contextualise and to offer to the reader a wider vision of the more general background situation in which the facts reported in this work took place.

European countries with important colonial backgrounds have had the possibility, after at least 50 years from the decolonisation process, to confront with all the aspects connected with the governance of a steady foreign presence on their territories.

Each of these countries has produced its own original way of dealing with this issue, and this variety of ideas is visible in the diversity of the various methodological approaches. This multiplicity mirrors the different theoretical models which have inspired the national actions on this theme.

Among European countries we can distinguish three different main approaches, corresponding to as many different political models of action toward immigration and citizenship: the one adopted in Anglo-Saxon countries, the French and the German one (Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, 2000).

The first of these models is the one which has been commonly defined as “communitarism” because of the attention it dedicates to the role of ethnic communities intended as semi autonomous entities. This model has been mostly applied in the United Kingdom, where existed a long tradition that can be traced back to Colonial times and which found its primary expression in strategies of governance such as the so called “dual mandate”<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> The expression “Dual mandate” summarized the idea that a colonial power on one hand had a responsibility toward the whole world, and on the other hand, also to the colonised, whose “moral and



The second model can be defined as “universalistic”, and it has found its practical expression in the principles on which is based the Republican French constitution. This model has as keywords concept such as citizen and citizenship. The individual and social loyalty to the Republic, *subsumes* any other identity or loyalty.

The third and last model is the one enacted by Germany, and which express multiculturalist issues whereas to the foreigner is only requested a minimal integration since his/her presence have been seen as temporary<sup>51</sup>.

All of these three approaches have produced situations very different among each other. Also, all have been subjected to critics, reinterpretations and reassessments, but nonetheless they have all constituted a systematic attempt to govern this particular social phenomenon.

For what concern instead Italy, things have gone differently.

During the late 80's, Italy has been invested by a sudden change that up to that year had never yet occurred. A country which was traditionally considered as the homeland of migrants, became suddenly the destination of the migratory trail of thousands of men and women coming mostly from eastern European countries and the southern areas of the world, mostly from north Africa.

Up to date, since that initial migratory flow, Italy never provided neither legislative nor political instruments to face this phenomenon in an organised, structured way. In the years 2000-2009, just like during the first Immigration Law issued in the '80's, our country was still treading with urgency and emergency proceedings that the different

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material advancement”, supported and guided by the same colonialists, which would ultimately lead to self governments. This model has been extensively described by Lugard, F. (1965) **The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa**. London: Frank Cass & Co.

There is a direct descent that connects this theory with the present day communitaristic model applied in UK

<sup>51</sup> The German term “*gastarbaiter*”, means literally “host-worker”.

governments changed and amended on each occasion.

Italy lacks a general frame statute and a general perspective on immigration. For this reason the laws promulgated concerning this issue have changed from government to government, always following emergency procedures.

Besides, each of the laws that have been issued up to date, have been amended and successively enriched by tenths of integrative documents whose complete knowledge and interpretation represents a nightmare also for very expert lawyers. The other, more important problem, lies in the fact that in many other cases, these laws have remained as simple principles declarations because although promulgated and approved, they have never received the necessary financial coverage to transform into practical actions the theoretical principles there affirmed.

The combination of these factors: the lack of a solid theoretical model to refer to, and the continuous indecision between the desire to control and the aspiration to integrate, coupled with the consistent presence of large pieces of shadow economy, gave origin to what I call the “Italian non-model”.

Without a full understanding of the Italian politics and of its characteristics, it would be very difficult for the foreign observer to understand the many existing contradictions.

I have already showed how in Rome the phenomenon of abusivism, either concerning the economic or the housing aspect, it is historical and widespread. Spaces like the many shanty towns occupied by Roma and migrants do not represent neither a driftwood of the past, nor an isolated case, but reflect instead the particular typology of the Italian model of ethnic relations.

The Italian non-model, far from representing an exclusively folkloric aspect is instead completely functional to the model of the contemporaneous post-fordist migrations.

All this happens inside a model that only apparently tries to be rigidly secured and programmed<sup>52</sup>, while shadow economy and irregularity are not at all accidental or unwanted events, but quite the contrary, they represent structural and desired characteristics of this model.

In this sense, the microcosm of the Casilino 700 does not become only the object of the attention that traditionally anthropologists and sociologists have devoted to situations of urban marginality and social exclusion, but becomes rather the litmus paper with which to evidence the peculiar and apparently contradictory aspects of our model of ethnic relations.

As I will document further on in this work, with the help of specific case studies and situations, the Italian approach to integration has been characterised mostly by interventions based on the concept of emergency.

This is due partly to political reasons and partly to historical factors. Both these aspects will be dealt with and explained detailedly in the following chapters.

#### **4.3.1 Dreamers of a successful life: Moroccan migrations in Italy:**

For centuries Italy was considered as the homeland of international emigration. In regions like Sicily it has been calculated that between 1876 and 1914 more than 72% of the population migrated, mainly towards north and south America, Australia and northern Europe. As a whole, more or less 30 millions of Italian citizens migrated abroad in less than 200 years (Gabaccia, 2000, p. 88).

The flow has continued until now, although in different shapes and numbers. Intellectuals and technicians migrate in search of better career opportunities, while

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<sup>52</sup> For example by means of instruments such as the system of quotas, always much below the real necessities and therefore certainly aware of the consistent dimension of the black economy phenomenon.

from the regions of Southern Italy, the labour force travels to Switzerland, Germany and other northern European countries, following the requests of the building market sector, and of other short term employments.

Later on, during the 1980's, this situation started to change, and for the first time in its history Italy became the destination of a new global migration flow, coming mostly from our nearest peripheries, the Balkans and the Maghreb countries.<sup>53</sup>

Of the many nationalities that reached Italy during this early stage of immigration, the Maghrebi component (especially Moroccan and Tunisian) was one of the largest among the African group.

The history of the relationship between Italians and Maghrebi is rooted in history, in particular for some parts of Italy (notably Sicily), the Maghrebi presence has been historical constant. From Roman times, until Byzantine era, the contacts with the Arabic world, and especially with Maghrebi people coming from the north African area, has been uninterrupted.

This is not the place whereto undertake an in-depth analysis of the relations between Italy and Maghreb. Suffice it here to remember the influence of prominent figures such as Frederick II of the Svevs, and his role in the creation of an important multicultural and multiconfessional intellectual centre during his reign.

Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox and Muslim were nonetheless sharing the same Mediterranean environment, and the cultural exchanges were more frequent than what each of the parts in conflict would agree to acknowledge<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> After Europe's enlargement, the first group for number of presences in Rome is that of the Romanian (Caritas, 2009). Serbian, Bosnian and Maghrebi are non comunitarian groups.

<sup>54</sup> Important and detailed informations on the Muslim Sicily can be found in Amari, M. (2002) **Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia**. Firenze: Le Monnier Italia. On the Svevs monarchy in Sicily see: Abulafia, D. (1988) **Frederick II. A Medieval Emperor**. London: Penguin Books.

After the Catholic *reconquista*, the Muslim population who colonised Sicily decreased dramatically, but small enclaves of fishermen and artisans, who were well integrated with the local population, decided to stay. This happened in particular in the western part of Sicily, in the provinces of Ragusa and Trapani. Although with varying fortunes, the contact between the two communities continued until today<sup>55</sup>.

The Maghrebi migration toward western Europe began with the French colonisation of northern African territories. During the First World War, the French state enrolled as compulsory labour force a large number of “colonial workers”. Following this, more than half a million Maghrebi were forcefully led to France. The majority of those who survived had been repatriated at the end of the war. This period spent in France, although under conditions of severe exploitation, gave them an insight about the possibilities offered by working abroad. In particular this phenomenon pertained to the Algerians, whose special status allowed them to move to France without too many difficulties (Fadloulah, 1994),

With the international economic crisis of the 1929, Maghrebi workers were among the first to suffer the direct consequences of unemployment, due to the widespread bankrupts and failures of French commercial and manufacturing companies. As a consequence to this crisis, the number of northern Africans living in France decreased sensibly.

The events of the Second World War proposed again the problem of finding both new army soldiers and cheap labour force. This need reached its peak after the war, due to the demographic collapse that followed the conflict. And this was the main reason for

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<sup>55</sup> Sicilian cooking demonstrates this ancient relation. Many of the ingredients utilised, and the cooking style as well, are identical to that used in the Maghreb, for example in the use of spices and other products like Raisin, Hazel, Honey and Dates. Every year in September, in a small Sicilian coastal village named Mazara del Vallo, takes place an historical *cous-cous* context. The use of *cous-cous* is widely spread throughout the whole coastal Sicily.

which Algerian citizens obtained the right to have free entrance in France. This important event produced the first notable effects on demography. In the initial phase the migratory flows were mainly composed by sole men, but they soon shifted toward a pattern of familiar migration, thus including, for the first time, also women. Algeria has been the sole Maghreb country to benefit from the abovementioned right of unrestricted entrance in France, therefore, due to the difficulty of reuniting families, the migration flows from both Morocco and Tunisia continued, until the late 60's, to be composed mainly by men (Abdelfettah, 2004).

In 1963, France negotiated further man-power agreement with both Morocco and Tunisia, followed by the new one of 1964 with Algeria. These agreements helped to intensify the voluntary migration from these countries, especially after the Independence from the colonial French rule, an event which increased the possibility of entering the German, Belgian and Dutch labour markets.

In the cities of Casablanca and Tunisi, the French government established employing offices and branches of the National Immigration Office in order to facilitate the process of employment and the subsequent transfer to France (House, 2004).

This short digression, dedicated to the use of foreign man-power during the colonial French period, will be of use to understand both migratory history, and the extent and origins of the existing networks of friendly and parental contacts that migrants from Maghreb had already established abroad. As we will see further on, the newly arrived migrants of the 80's and 90's could and will use these networks. Although France remains an important point of reference and destination for the Maghrebi migratory flows, other countries like Italy (and Spain) have replaced France as the primary destination of Moroccan labour force migrations. In the last twenty years in fact, this

country became a very important migratory basin for Italy.

In order to understand fully this and other immigration processes, we have to take into account not only the traditional *push-pull* factors, normally used in sometimes a mechanistic way, to explain movements of population, but also, and especially in the case of Morocco, of the relevance of the existing social networks in the construction of migratory trails (Persichetti, 2003, p. 117)<sup>56</sup>. Official statistics reports that in 2005 there were 2.7 million of foreigners living in Italy, and out of these, 227.00, nearly 8% of the total, are of Moroccan origin (Caritas, 2005, p. 51). As we can see in the Table below, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria are respectively first, second, fourth and seventh in relation to the presence of the other African communities in Italy.

*Tab. 4.6: Italy. Country of origin of the first twenty African communities (2005).*

Country of Origin	Total	Male	Regions	Total	Male	Province	Total	Male
Morocco	227.940	157.787	Lombardia	54.465	38.093	Torino	16.350	11.088
Tunisia	60.572	45.679	E.Romagna	12.577	9.586	Ragusa	4.426	3.832
Senegal	47.762	42.596	Lombardia	17.616	15.488	Bergamo	5.480	4.800
Egypt	44.798	37.107	Lombardia	31.096	27.413	Milano	22.776	19.529
Nigeria	24.986	10.229	Veneto	5.431	3.025	Roma	2.365	1.080
Ghana	23.060	14.360	Lombardia	6.613	3.981	Brescia	3.333	1.983
Algeria	16.835	14.027	Campania	3.572	3.365	Napoli	1.474	1.368
Ivory Coast	9.576	5.406	Lombardia	3.604	1.986	Milano	781	460
Mauritius	6.581	2.982	Sicilia	3.378	1.514	Catania	2.091	979
Eritrea	6.318	2.118	Lombardia	2.040	5.423	Milano	1.780	442
Somalia	5.148	2.196	Lombardia	892	326	Roma	719	245
Ethiopia	5.137	1.486	Lazio	2.190	572	Roma	2.086	553
Burkina F.	4.796	3.529	Lombardia	1.505	1.030	Napoli	826	781
Camerun	4.293	2.417	E.Romagna	726	447	Roma	442	215
Capo Verde	3.708	781	Lazio	1.718	373	Roma	1.658	357
Congo	3.312	1.748	Lazio	1.038	494	Roma	934	436
Liberia	2.573	2.369	Calabria	1.394	1.350	Crotone	1.381	1.337
Togo	1.484	953	Lombardia	489	328	Roma	220	119
Guinea	1.393	955	Lombardia	335	234	Roma	190	102
Benin	1.266	878	Lombardia	427	292	Roma	192	117

Source: Dossier Statistico Immigrazione Caritas/Migrantes 2005. Elaborations on data given by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>56</sup> For ethnographic data concerning this issue see paragraph 6.1 for interviews of the young Moroccans met during my fieldwork and on their migratory trails and nets.

The history of Moroccan migrations to Italy can be traced back to the 1970's. During these years, seasonal ambulant traders would come to work for the summer season on Italian beaches selling carpets, various garments and *bijouterie* (costume jewellery).

Due to the fact that the stay was limited to the summer period, they never had any need for any kind of visa or permission, because visa requirements were introduced in Italy only in 1991<sup>57</sup>. After this date, in order to engage in this commerce, they would plan their arrival to Italy entering the country with a tourist visa, and then overstaying it.

Besides, this small ambulant trade, although illegal, is often tolerated by Police authorities<sup>58</sup> and since it is practised along the beaches, in places difficult to be reached, controls are even scarcer and more difficult to be enacted.

These seasonal migrants of the early period did not have the intention of establish them permanently in Italy, but they would instead practise a sort of temporary migration, going back and forth from Italy to Morocco. Often male children would participate, accompanying their father in his travels, with the idea of going back to Morocco after having gathered a certain amount of money that could allow the establishment of a small business, or the building of a new family house (De Angelis, 1991b, p. 102).

During the 1990's, other groups of immigrants arrived in Italy from Africa, following the openings offered by the first Italian Immigration Act, promulgated in 1990. This law, commonly called "Legge Martelli" from the name of the MP who promoted it, was the first official act made by the Italian government concerning foreigner's immigration. It defined and gave indications in relation to three important issues: citizenship,

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<sup>57</sup> In 1991 Italy joins Schengen.

<sup>58</sup> Often Police authorities prefers to "turn a blind eye" on this commerce, knowing that no welfare plans exists to take charge of the immigrants need, and they certainly prefer to deal with unauthorized commerce instead then with more deviant or dangerous activities. Once more it is here evident the peculiarity of the Italian situation in relation to informality. These trades have the advantage of being practised without any licence or permission, so that the earnings would be completely tax free.



immigration and asylum<sup>59</sup>.

After that, and during the decade 1992 - 2002 the flow continued, steadily increasing in number, and partly modifying itself, as visible in the data shown in Table 4.7.

Tab. 4.7: Italy. Permit of stay for gender and nationality. 1992 – 2002

1992				2002				1992 - 2002	
Countries	MF	F	% F	Countries	MF	F	% F	MF	F
Morocco	83.292	8.180	9,8	Morocco	167.889	54.140	32,2	101,6	561,9
Tunisia	41.547	3.733	9,0	Albania	159.317	61.747	38,8	540,2	1.662,2
Philippines	36.316	24.407	67,2	Romania	82.985	42.970	51,8	905,9	797,8
Fr. Yugoslavia	26.727	9.911	37,1	Philippines	67.711	44.131	65,2	86,4	80,8
Albania	24.886	3.504	14,1	China	62.146	29.085	46,8	293,9	362,9
Senegal	24.194	694	2,9	Tunisia	53.356	12.814	24,0	28,4	243,3
Egypt	18.473	2.624	14,2	Fr. Yugoslavia	39.278	16.470	41,9	47,0	66,2
China	15.776	6.238	39,8	Sri Lanka	38.763	16.949	43,7	220,0	351,0
Poland	12.139	6.757	55,7	Senegal	37.806	3.319	8,8	56,3	378,2
Sri Lanka	12.114	3.758	31,0	Poland	32.889	23.699	72,1	170,9	250,7
Ghana	11.303	3.506	31,0	India	32.507	12.582	38,7	227,8	195,0
Brazil	10.953	7.513	68,6	Egypt	31.814	6.483	20,4	72,2	147,1
India	9.918	4.265	43,0	Peru	31.739	21.076	66,4	532,0	558,4
Argentina	9.603	5.036	52,4	Macedonia	24.685	8.238	33,4	n.d.	n.d.
Somalia	9.265	5.685	61,4	Bangladesh	22.048	4.120	18,7	297,8	2.475,0
Romania	8.250	4.786	58,0	Nigeria	20.835	12.374	59,4	270,3	410,1
Ethiopia	7.615	5.024	66,0	Ghana	19.993	7.503	37,5	76,9	114,0
Iran	6.821	2.359	34,6	Pakistan	19.985	3.437	17,2	186,2	1.285,9
Peru	5.022	3.201	63,7	Brazil	19.864	14.599	73,5	81,4	94,3
Fr. USSR	3.716	2.709	72,9	Croatia	16.564	7.491	45,2	n.d.	n.d.
<b>Total</b>	<b>648.935</b>	<b>259.050</b>	<b>39,9</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1.448.392</b>	<b>682.635</b>	<b>47,1</b>	<b>123,2</b>	<b>163,5</b>

Source: Vitiello, 2005:116: personal elaboration on ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) Data.

We have seen how, during the early 1980's, the flow from Morocco was characterised by the young age of migrants (from 15 to 40 years of age), by their gender (male predominantly), and by their occupation in sectors like that of industry in northern Italy. This "industrial" migration is concentrated mainly in certain areas and regions like Lombardia, Emilia Romagna and Veneto, where the presence of big and small scale

<sup>59</sup> L. 28/02/1990, n.39. It has also been the first Italian law where the word *refugee* is not associated with citizens coming from former socialist countries, who were for decades the only category who could automatically claim to be recognised as such.

industries<sup>60</sup> attracts the highest number of foreign workers.

The remaining migrants were mostly employed in seasonal jobs, while others were generally employed as unskilled labourers or engaged in small scale trade (ambulants for the larger part).

But this model, although partly still unchanged, has undergone a modification in its demographic composition. While male migration has doubled up, the number of Moroccan women is six times higher than that of 1992. Female presence rose from 9% in the year 1992 to the 32% in 2002. It is the effect of familial reunions and of new births, although male presence continues to be dominant, generally a common trait in migration from Islamic countries like Maghreb and South Asia. (Vitiello, 2005, p.117).

This massive feminine migration constitutes an indicator that shows decidedly how Italy changed her role. The increased number of Moroccan workers asking for regularisation trying to formalise institutionally their presence on our territory demonstrates that Italy has decidedly shifted from being a country of transit, to being a country of definitive destination and settlement.

It must also be remembered that differences exist between the first generation migrants, directed mainly toward France and constituted for the larger part by illiterate individuals of rural origin and the migrants of the 80's and 90's, newcomers of the new generations. This last and more recent wave of the 90's, is instead composed of young Moroccans who have generally a higher level of education when compared to Italians.

#### **4.3.2 Roma in Italy and in Europe: the quest for citizenship rights.**

Although this dissertation is aimed at analysing contemporary aspects of Romani

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<sup>60</sup> Important informations about the story and the structure of the Italian industrial system are detailedly given in: Ginsborg, P. (1998) **L'Italia del tempo presente**. Torino: Einaudi.

groups, it is useful to undertake a brief historical overview of their social and cultural specificities, and of their relation with the non Roma society.

Roma arrived in Europe around the XIVth century from India, thus concluding a migratory process that spread the group through the whole Europe following different itineraries<sup>61</sup>.

Among these itineraries, we can distinguish three main migration flows and directions. The first one crossed Russia and eastern Europe up to north European countries such as Germany, Scandinavian area and England (Gacikanè, Sinti, Travellers). The second flow arrived in Spain (Lovara, Kalè), Italy (Italian Roma, Sinti), and France (Manouches, Lovara) and other Mediterranean countries. The last flow travelled to and settled into the Slavic region and eastern Europe (Vlakh Roma, Xoraxanè, etc.). (Liégeois, 1994, pp. 29-31).

The group occupied specific economical niches that were useful and necessary to the sedentary communities encountered during their travels. Their initial main activities are that of ambulant trade and begging, but also horse commerce, healing and divination practices (coffee or palm reading) characterised their economy in the first period. Later on, other activities such as smithery, copper working, animal taming and travelling carnivals, added to the first ones, becoming one of their peculiar economic occupation.

From the beginning the relationship between *Gadjos* (non Roma) and Roma is ambivalent: on one side the kind of expertise and services that Roma are carrying are necessary to the isolated, agricultural communities of the Renaissance era, but on the

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<sup>61</sup> Indian origins have been ascertained by linguistic studies that demonstrated how Romani vocabulary and grammar are connected to Sanskrit. These studies also shows the tight relation of the Romanès with living Indian tongues such as Hindi, Mahrati, Gujurati and Kashmiri (de Vaux de Foletier, 1970, p. 34).

other hand their mysterious language, physical appearance, customs and attitudes, and occupational sectors, begun to be viewed as menacing for the host population<sup>62</sup>.

The Europe in which Roma group arrives will soon become that of the Counterreformation and of the rigid adhesion either to the Roman Catholic or to the Protestant model, the same Europe that soon will expel both Muslims and Jewish.

Measures enacted by governments oscillated between attempts to control and open forms of repression. In certain Italian regions it was even possible to kill a Roma without risking any form of punishment: it simply was not considered a crime.

Pope Pius V, author of the *Hebraeorum gens* (1569), with which he decreed the expulsion all the Jewish from the territory of the Pontiff State, also took proceedings against Roma through deportation and compulsive work, or torturing or executing them in large numbers under accuse of theft, magery and similar crimes. In the chapter “*De cinganis*”, contained in the deliberations of the Ravenna Council (1568), requests to local Bishops to expel them.

Roma would be identified in different ways: they were considered one of the lost tribe of Israel, later on they will be called “Egyptians” or foreign pilgrims (this is the way they present to the Pope Martino V, asking for a safe-conduct to continue their European pilgrimage). Then this definition will shift from the one tied to geographic origin and physical appearances to other, more derogatory, similar to the ones to which Muslims and Jewish were subjected.

During the XVIth century, many European states developed rules that allowed the city government to pay a certain amount of money to the Roma communities arriving into

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<sup>62</sup> Since Classic era and through modern ages, smiths and metal workers had a “liminal” status in the society and where the object of various taboos and interdictions.

town, in order to make them continue their travel without stopping or settling in the city's territory.

For those who settled, the strategy of coercion to abandon any visible sign of identity has been massive and historically documented in nearly all European countries where Roma have arrived. Restrictions included the constraint not to speak their mother tongue, the interdiction to migrate or to dress "the gipsy way", and the limitation of their economic activities.

During the period of the Enlightenment, policies toward Roma shifted to even more strong practices of forced integration and assimilation. The government of the Austrian Empress Marie Antoinette produced a whole corpus of laws dedicated to Roma. These regulations included forced sedentarization, prohibition to speak the Romani language and the forced schooling of children, which in case of transgression could be sent for adoption to local farmers (Narciso, 1990, pp. 67 - 68).

Through the centuries, the contact between Gadjos and Roma has always been problematic.

Segregation, social exclusion and oppression have been the main characteristics of this troubled relationship. The forced practices of assimilation have stimulated the adaptive strategies of this group, always forced to trim for themselves space of existence in the interstices that the host society left unused.

To these menaces the Roma group answered with a defensive strategy based on two main aspects: a flexible socio economic structure and a high degree of mobility on the territory. In a social structure of this kind, the capacity to cope with different situations and often hostile environments, represented, until present days, a vital characteristic for the survival of the Roma communities.

Like in past times, also today Roma groups are very diverse and they are dispersed in the whole world in many different areas and regional communities. It has been estimated that the Roma population oscillates between 7 and 9 million people in Europe. Of these, the biggest part results to be residing in Romania (estimated between 1 and 2 millions), while western Europe's largest population are to be found in Spain (est. 650.000), France (est. 280.000), Germany (est. 70.000), Portugal (est. 40.000), Ireland (est. 22.000) and Italy (est. 130.000). (Piasere, 2004, p. 7).

The largest number of Roma is concentrated in the area of central and eastern Europe. During the socialist period, Roma residing in these nations were considered as any other citizen: they had to have an occupation (unemployment was considered "illegal") and most of them had access to popular housing and to other services like schools like any other citizen.

In these countries<sup>63</sup> the specificities of local minorities have been ignored in the name of the more ample adhesion to a national state identity established by laws. Much in the same way as it had happened in the past centuries, Roma were forced to "integrate".

During the decade 1950-1960 in eastern European countries, a long list of laws and other acts were promulgated to prevent them practising nomadism (Romania, 1962; Former Soviet Union, 1956; Former Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, 1958 and Poland, 1964) along with the duty to send children to school.

Authorities declared that these measures were intended to help this minority to "integrate" with the sedentary population. What instead happened was that these proceedings have contributed to the eradication of thousands of Roma by means of forced deportation from one place to the other. An indicator of the failure of these

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<sup>63</sup> Notably Hungaria, Romania, former Czechoslovakia, former Yugoslavia, Poland, Albania, Bulgaria.

“integration” policies, can be seen in the fact that even now, like in socialist times, Roma children were, and still are, frequently enrolled in special schools for the less advantaged children, like in the documented cases of Bulgaria, Slovakia and Hungary (European Commission, 2004, p. 18).

As it has been extensively shown by some authors (Reyniers, 1998, p. 168), apart from some peculiar cases of Roma nomads furnishing services, who nowadays are still occupying specific economic niches like the Italian Sinti “giostrai” (circus or carnival owners) or the Kalderasha<sup>64</sup>, (horse breeder and brass polishers), the nomadism of the initial phase of the migration (IX - XIII Century) based on their economical services, gave room to a kind of nomadism determined by the different welcoming conditions offered in the country of arrivals and by the relationship with the sedentary populations. This process became more evident during the 1980’s, when the collapse of nearly all the former governments changed remarkably Roma’s live conditions in these countries.

It is the case, for example, of many familiar groups who moved from Yugoslavia toward Italy during the sixties, and then the second wave, during the 1990’s, due to the war and to the fall of the socialist experiment.

For former Yugoslavian Roma for example, the first wave of the sixties was mainly composed of Roma who came to Italy<sup>65</sup> attracted by the so called Italian “economical miracle”. Their activities consisted mostly in small scale trading of various goods: children and women garments from the small Neapolitan textile sector, used cars and

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<sup>64</sup> Kalderasha practices a form of seasonal semi-nomadism and who have expressed the desire to continue to live in mobile homes. Sinti, another group of Italian Roma, are still practicing forms of nomadism. Their principal economic activity consists in mobile shows such as Carnivals and Circuses, and to this purpose was issued a national law (L.18/03/1968 n.337) which required to local administrations the individuation of a list of areas, furnished with water, garbage collection and electricity to be dedicated to the temporary stationing of members of this group.

<sup>65</sup> We have to remember that for Yugoslavian citizens has always been possible to travel abroad due to a 1965 law which regulated migrations (Reyniers, 1988).

other mechanic parts, toys etc. But what in the sixties was considered as an option became an imperative, following the Yugoslavian war of the '90's.

In all eastern countries the collapse of socialist governments and the mutated economic conditions have provoked a general pauperisation of the weakest sectors of society, Roma in first place. Besides, the rise of nationalistic parties and the explosion of a wave of right wing extremists in the whole Europe, created a plethora of racist militant's organisations, who by means of assaults and open violence are threatening the survival of this group. The European Roma Rights Centre, an international NGO dedicated to the support of Romani people, has monitored the situation and produced many reports describing abuses and violences against the Roma communities<sup>66</sup>, and according to statistics and data produced by the European Parliament, Roma have resulted in being the most hated and discriminated minority in Europe (Council of Europe, 2006c).

The scientific production and the scarcity of practical interventions by many European governments have been evidenced clearly by many reports. In particular, one recent Report produced in February 2006 ends with a series of recommendations about social inclusion of members of this group (Council of Europe, 2006a). The reading of these recommendations is another indicator of the fact that the Roma's life condition represents a very distant problem for any politician's agenda and that for this group there is still much to be done.

ERRC publishes periodical reports concerning several Roma issues and, in particular, useful and detailed country reports with the aim of monitoring Roma's life condition in European countries and releasing socio demographic data and other informations on issues such as integration, health, housing condition, racism etc. Although the most

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<sup>66</sup> See on this topic the numerous reports and press articles collected since the year 2000 by the ERRC in various eastern and central European countries. These reports are available from the ERRC website: [http://www.errc.org/English\\_index.php](http://www.errc.org/English_index.php) [Accessed February 2010].



dramatic situation for Roma are to be found in eastern and central European states, their life conditions seems to be very difficult also in countries such as Germany, France or Great Britain.

The case of the United Kingdom represents an interesting example. In this country there is a long tradition for tools like that of Ethnic Monitoring through publicly funded bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality.

The Race Relations Act of 1976, was subsequently amended with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act in 2000, with which the institutions are called to promote more effectively the so called “race equality duty” through a series of different actions which entrusted to institutions the duty of promoting race equality.

Unfortunately, the data related to British Roma and Travellers are very scarce. According to the 1976 Race Relations Act, they constitute an ethnic group, but they have not been included in the national ten year census, therefore data related to them are put together under the general item “White others” and can not therefore be used for the purpose of Ethnic Monitoring.

Sasha Barton, member of the CRE, in an ERRC report dedicated to Ethnic Monitoring in Britain, states that:

‘... However, Britain’s Gypsy and Traveller communities have not yet benefited from ethnic monitoring. There is little reliable data on these groups and this means that we do not fully know about the level of deprivation and discrimination that Gypsies and Travellers face. However, from the word-of-mouth evidence, and the scattered data that we do have, we can get an idea of the level of disadvantage that exists: Gypsies and Travellers are the group most at risk in the education system, and by halfway through secondary school only 20 percent are in regular school attendance; Gypsies and Travellers have poor health, with the life expectancy rates 10 years less for men and 12 years less for women than for other ethnic groups; There are high levels of public hostility towards Gypsies and Travellers: In a recent poll, over one third of those questioned said that they felt personally

prejudiced against Gypsies and Travellers – even more than were prejudiced against asylum seekers and refugees ...’ (ERRC, 2007).

Although multiculturalists issues are a matter of everyday’s life in the United Kingdom, and deeply rooted into its culture and legislation, the local Roma community of Travellers, still experiments forms of racism and discrimination. For what concern schools achievement for example, ‘... at the age of 15 - 16, attainment for Gypsy pupils, is less than half the national average and around half that of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils (the group classed among the lowest achievers) ...’ (ERRC, 2007, p. 4).

Another major problem, especially concerning Travellers, is the one related to the establishment of Campsites. Notwithstanding the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, that introduced a mandatory duty on Local Authorities to ‘secure the establishment of such sites by local authorities for the use of gipsies and other persons of nomadic habit’<sup>67</sup>, still much has to be done for the positive put into practice of the Act, due to inadequate and insufficient site provision, and to the failure of local authorities, to comply effectively with their duties (O’Nions, 1995). Other problems regard episodes of racism and discrimination directed toward members of this minority, and extensively reported on the ERRC site<sup>68</sup>.

The British situation that I have described here, concerns mostly the Travellers group, who are local Roma, and therefore have a British citizenship (Roma from eastern European countries are subjected to other regulations such as the ones relating to refugees or either to average migrants).

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<sup>67</sup> Caravan Sites Act, 1968 (c.52).

<sup>68</sup> This is not the place where to undertake an overview on Racism and anti Roma discrimination in Britain, but various detailed reports and other materials such as press releases and Court orders can be found at the ERRC Archives [online]. Available from: [http://www.errc.org/Archivum\\_index.php](http://www.errc.org/Archivum_index.php) [Accessed February 2010].

A brief overview of the Italian situation can offer a different perspective on this subject, showing what happens when Roma groups are mostly composed by refugees or foreigners, especially for what concern the use of citizenship rights.

The Yugoslavian war of the 90's and the dramatic events that took place later in Albania and in the Kosovo region forced many Roma to seek shelter in Italy and in other host countries.

These migrations of whole extended familiar groups have crashed against the reality of the European welcoming model, and in particular for what concerns us here, with the peculiarity of the Italian model.

In Italy in particular the situation is much diversified and it includes:

- Roma who are born in Italy and are Italian citizens.
- Roma who are born in Italy and who are not Italian citizens.
- Roma migrants (i.e. Serbian migrations of the '60s).
- Refugees and displaced persons of Roma origin.
- New European citizens of Roma origin (Romania).

Except for what concerns the first case of Italian citizens of Roma origin (such as Sinti or Italian Roma), all the other persons are mostly coming from Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bulgaria and Romania. Many are classified as irregulars, while many others had even been the object of an expulsion proceeding because of their violation of the norms regulating the entrance and permanence in Italy. This situation afflicts also people who are born in Italy, in many cases, people who have been living here for generations, so that they do not even speak the language of their country of origin.

As far as citizenship is concerned, for example, this is linked to the concept of stable residence in a given locality, even though it does provide for categories with no fixed abode, the possibility of registering in the Population Register, choosing between the Municipality where they were born, and the one where they reside<sup>69</sup>. However it is very difficult for Romani people to make use of this possibility because the Municipalities often refuse them to grant citizenship precisely because of this “double option”, stating that it was the *other* Municipality the one to which they should have applied. Besides, even when the application is accepted, new problems arise. Because of the frequent evictions, that forces them to move according to the situation, children are often born and registered in Municipalities different from the ones of their parents, making it even more difficult for them to become citizens. For this, and other reasons that cannot be dealt with here, many Romani people, although living in Italy since many years, are still in fact considered as foreigners (Council of Europe, 2002).

The majority is forced to live under conditions of severe socio-economic exclusion. Differently from other foreigners, they have very scarce possibility of integration in the world of occupation, also because of the many prejudices against this minority.

To all this we must add the problem related to housing. Actually the Italian policies of the encampments force them to live in huts and shanty towns. Many of these dwellings are illegally built, and therefore the inhabitants are subjected to sudden evictions and destruction of their homes, a factor that compelled Roma to re-learn after centuries, their long time abandoned nomadic practices. The existence and the persistency of these dwellings are the symbol of an *apartheid* in which the Roma communities have been kept up to date (Council of Europe, 2006a) and which led them toward a forced

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<sup>69</sup> Law n.1128, 24/12/1954.

nomadism, and a forced “gypsiness” that seems to be more the product of a stereotyped idea of the Romani culture and history than a scientific theory on which rely and build policies on it.

The task of getting a job becomes even more difficult when we consider the background of an overall situation where steady employment is getting progressively scarcer, and where flexibility has become the key word for nearly every worker in Europe and abroad. Furthermore, the access to most kinds of job in Italy is based on familiar or personal relations. Meritocratic considerations are the very last to be considered when applying, and this model, widespread and well known to every Italian citizen, pushes the Roma at a cosmic distance from any real possibility of social inclusion<sup>70</sup>.

Few of the youngest, in the new generations have learned to work as cultural mediators, but their number is very small, and they can be considered therefore only as a small *avant garde*. Up to date the only activity they can legally undertake is the *manghèl* (begging), legalised in Italy in 1999.

The problem of the residence permits, whether as a refugee or for reasons of work, is certainly the first that needs to be solved and is often the most difficult one.

I describe below two different cases, a family of Serbian origin but born in Italy and a family of Bosnian refugees.

The first case is that of a young Rudar Rom living in a Roman camp. He was born in Italy in 1968 and should therefore already be an Italian citizen but the law requires him to show that he has been continuously present on national territory and that he has a regular job. R. has even passed the CCIAA<sup>71</sup> (Italian Chamber of Commerce)

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<sup>70</sup> The social immobility of the Italian society has been deeply studied by sociologists. See in particular: Schizzerotto, A. and Cobalti, A. (1994) **La mobilità sociale in Italia**. Bologna: Il Mulino.

<sup>71</sup> Until 2006 the pertinent institution for the release of trade licence was the REC (Public Register of Commerce).

examination and is waiting for a street trader's licence, his three children are attending primary school regularly and doing well, his wife has her permit but, since Romani marriages are *de facto*, he cannot even take advantage from the section of the Italian immigration laws dedicated to reuniting families. This because he is not registered as married according to our law.

He had a regular residence permit which he tried to renew on its expiry but, since the waiting period for this renewal dragged on for months, his passport also expired in the meantime.

Some months later he was informed that his residence permit would not be renewed<sup>72</sup> and when he protested an expulsion order was served on him in view of the fact that, according to the law, his presence in our country was to be considered illegal.

A long statement from the Headmistress of the school his children attends asked that their education not be interrupted. It said that he had a clean record and the fact that he had been born and had always lived here and therefore had no links with Serbia, were all of no avail.

R. is now in a totally illegal situation according to a law which cannot understand that it may be destroying his life.

Besides, the efficacy of this expulsion measure is generally practically zero because a Rom would never abandon his family, it is unthinkable for them to go back to Serbia where he has never lived, and therefore R. continues to stay in the camp in an even more intolerable situation than before.

The other case is that of a Bosnian family which arrived in Italy after June 1991, and although they had every right to be recognised as refugees under Law 390/92 they were

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<sup>72</sup> Being of Serbian nationality he does not qualify under the former Refugee Law L.R.390/92 dedicated to former Yugoslavian (which is in any case no longer valid) and not being an employee, he does not qualify under D.L.18/11/1996 n.489.

served with an administrative expulsion order and neither appealed to the TAR (Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale - Regional Administrative Court) nor left the country<sup>73</sup>. This family has now been living in a Roman camp for twenty years with their children regularly attending the local school, their daughter has her own residence permit but the parents are still under an expulsion order that it is now too late to do anything about. Apart from this expulsion order, they both have a clean criminal record and it is very difficult for them to understand that the mere lack of a piece of paper places them in a more irreparable situation than if they had been convicted of theft.

Up to date (2009), and since the time I have met them in 1992, they still could not succeed in obtaining a regular permit of stay. During all these years, they have been living first in the Casilino 700 encampment, then for a couple of years in the Casilino 900 one, and since 2002 they have found a “temporary” shelter into another informal Roma dwelling in the outskirts of Rome. Under the current Italian immigration law, which declared a penal crime undocumented migration, this is a penally indictable offence.

As it happens with other groups considered as disadvantaged, also Roma have been the object of several institutional and NGO’s interventions during the last 40 years. In lack of a national legislation regarding this minority, the Roma question is handled entirely by local governments (*Regione, Provincia* and *Comune*)<sup>74</sup>. Before entering into the specific case of the Casilino 700 encampment, I will provide some data concerning the situation of Roma groups in the city of Rome.

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<sup>73</sup> Before the promulgation of the Law 15/07/2009, n.94 (DDL 733-b) (the so called “Security Package”), undocumented migration was considered as an administrative offense and not a penal one, therefore the competence was of the Administrative Regional Court.

<sup>74</sup> Roma minority has not been included in the law on the Protection of Italian Historical Linguistic Minorities (L.482, 15/12/1999, later integrated by the DPR n.345 02/05/2001).

The Roma presence in Rome is hard to quantify because of the lack of recent official data<sup>75</sup>. Also, there is a sensible difference between the data reported by the past left wing administration (see Table 4.8), and those released by the new right wing one led by Mayor Gianni Alemanno which reported a total number of more than a hundred Roma settlements in 2009<sup>76</sup>.

These differences must be attributed to the fact that the Roma issue has played an important role in Roman local political scene. The reduction of Roma encampments has been one of the first actions sponsored by the right wing alliance during the 2008 Municipality elections and enacted with the evictions described in the so called “Piano Nomadi”<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> The last official Roma census conducted by the Special Immigration Office in 1995 recorder a number of 5.467 Roma, half of which under age and dispersed at the time in one of the fifty encampment of Rome distributed throughout the municipal territory. Always according to this data of the total, 1.675 were Italian Roma (Sinti or Napulengre or others) while 4.812 were foreigners, out of whom only 724 complied with the regulations of the permit of stay. (Source: Comune di Roma, Ufficio Speciale Immigrazione (1997) *Censimento Nomadi* Novembre 1995 **Lacio Drom**, Zingari a Roma oggi. (2): 30 and ff.). The more recent 2008 census registered 7.177 Roma presences in Rome. Ministry of Interior (2008) **Censimento nomadi** [online]. Available from: [http://www.interno.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/sala\\_stampa/speciali/censimento\\_nomadi/index.html](http://www.interno.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/sala_stampa/speciali/censimento_nomadi/index.html) [Accessed February 2010].

<sup>76</sup> Comune di Roma (2009) **Presenze nomadi** [online]. Available from: [http://www.comune.roma.it/was/wps/portal/!ut/p/\\_s\\_7\\_0\\_A/7\\_0\\_21L?menuPage=/&targetPage=/Homepage/Area\\_Content/Primo\\_Piano/info-869782002.jsp](http://www.comune.roma.it/was/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s_7_0_A/7_0_21L?menuPage=/&targetPage=/Homepage/Area_Content/Primo_Piano/info-869782002.jsp) [Accessed February 2010].

<sup>77</sup> Comune di Roma (2009) **Il piano nomadi** (Plan for nomads) [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed March 2010].



Tab. 4.8: Roma in Rome by group, campsite and religion.

District	Campsite	Presences	%	Group	Religion
<b>I</b>	Campo Boario	136	2,6	Kalderasha	Serbian Orthodox
<b>II</b>	Foro Italico	128	2,5	Kaniarija	Serbian Orthodox
	Stadio Flaminio	9	0,1	Neapolitan	Roman Catholic
<b>IV</b>	Monte Amiata	48	0,9	Xoraxanè	Muslim
<b>V</b>	Salviati 1	72	1,4	Rudara	Serbian Orthodox
	Salviati 2	270	5,2	Xoraxanè /Rudara	Muslim/ Serbian Orth.
	Martora	174	3,4	Rudara	Serbian Orthodox
	Cervara	20	0,3	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Spellanzon	87	1,7	Sinti	Roman Catholic
	Casal Tidei	39	0,7	Sinti	Roman Catholic
<b>VI</b>	Gordiani	154	3,0	Rudara	Serbian Orthodox
<b>VII</b>	Casilino 700	657	13,1	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Casilino 900	293	5,8	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Centocelle	44	0,8	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Olmi	13	0,2	Sinti	Roman Catholic
	Togliatti	19	0,3	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Dameta	49	0,9	Kaniarija	Serbian Orthodox
	Luigi Nono	30	0,5	Sinti	Roman Catholic
<b>VIII</b>	Acqua Vergine	200	3,9	Kaniarija	Serbian Orthodox
	Via di Salone	519	10,2	Kaniarija/Xoraxanè	Serbian Orthodox/Muslim
<b>IX</b>	Arco di Travertino	31	0,6	Xoraxanè	Muslim
<b>X</b>	La Barbuta	194	3,8	Xoraxanè /Sinti	Muslim/Roman Catholic
<b>XI</b>	Savini	643	12,7	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Via delle 7 Chiese	18	0,3	Sinti	Roman Catholic
<b>XII</b>	Tor De' Cenci	229	4,5	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Tor Pagnotta	78	1,5	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Mezzocamino	22	0,4	Kalderasha	Serbian Orthodox
	Butera	4	0,1	Kalderasha	Serbian Orthodox
<b>XIII</b>	Ortolani (Acilia)	97	1,9	Kaniarija	Serbian Orthodox
	Lenormant	6	0,1	Rudara	Serbian Orthodox
<b>XV</b>	Candoni	245	4,8	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Muratella	75	1,4	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Mazzacurati	18	0,3	Sinti	Roman Catholic
<b>XVIII</b>	Monachina	54	1,1	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Lombroso S.M.Pietà	141	2,7	Xoraxanè	Muslim
	Tor di Quinto (via del Baiardo)	231	4,5	Kaniarija	Serbian Orthodox
	<b>TOTAL</b>	5.467	100		

Source: Municipality of Rome, NAE Urban police, Special Office for Immigration, 1999. Data excerpted from 1995 census.

Of the 5.467 Roma presences registered in Rome in the 1995 census<sup>78</sup>, only a small percentage (643)<sup>79</sup> are of Italian citizenship, while the remaining are foreign Roma, mostly from former Yugoslavia and Albania, and, more recently from Romania<sup>80</sup>.

The first assignment of popular housing to Italian citizens of Roma origin (*Napulengre* and *Abruzzesi* Roma) happened in 1981, while the first three authorized encampments were built in 1987. The first official census of the Roma and Sinti population in the capital goes back to 1993, and recorded a presence of nearly 6.000 persons. Until the year 2000, the majority of the encampments were placed in the eastern part of Rome, and in particular in the Vth, VIth, VIIth and VIIIth District. In 1999 and until 2008 the Roma encampments officially recognised and registered were 35. Of these, 7 were defined as “equipped” (i.e. recognised by the Municipality and served with water, electricity, container, sewer service etc.), 8 “semi-equipped” (recognised by the Municipality and equipped with a service of chemical toilets in common, water, and accomodation of the families into small huts or camping vans) while another 9 were classified as “non-equipped”, meaning that they are abusive informal dwellings without any kind of supply (water, toilets, trash collection etc.). The remaining 11 consisted of either houses from Social Housing or municipality residences<sup>81</sup>.

In the following paragraph we will discuss one of the largest “non-equipped” encampments that ever existed in Rome. The description of the daily activities and of

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<sup>78</sup> The 1995 Municipality of Rome Nomads census is the only official available, though the Municipality of Rome’s Nomads Plan reported a number of 7.177 persons. See: Comune di Roma, Commissario Straordinario per l’Emergenza Nomadi (2009) **Il Piano Nomadi**. [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed March 2010].

<sup>79</sup> Comune di Roma, Ufficio Speciale Immigrazione (1997) Censimento Nomadi Novembre 1995 **Lacio Drom**, Zingari a Roma oggi. (2): 30 and ff.

<sup>80</sup> To this number we must add other small groups coming from Bulgaria.

<sup>81</sup> All the definitions above quoted: “equipped”, “semi-equipped” and “non-equipped” are the ones used by the Municipality. The access to public classifications for social housing is open to Italian citizens and to foreigners registered as regularised residents (i.e. in possession of a Permit of Stay), and with a minimum of three years of documented employment in Italy.

the organisation of the Casilino 700 encampment will be used as an example of the dialectics between Roma and institutions, recorded during my ethnographic practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE PLACE

#### 5.1 The Centocelle neighbourhood: an historical introduction

In the previous chapters of this work, I have introduced and discussed the key historical and social events which have influenced the development of the Roman history during the last hundred years. The demographic expansion that resulted from the post war internal migrations and the new urban development which in the course of these period, have all combined to shape a new form for the modern city of Rome.

From this general historical background I will enter into the specific details concerning the Roman neighbourhood of Centocelle, situated in the VIIth District, where the encampment object of this thesis was placed<sup>1</sup>.

The knowledge about the historical precedents of this location is necessary in order to understand the elements which determined the present configuration of this area.

I will analyse the different factors that during the early 90's have made this District, and particularly this neighbourhood, so attractive for the many migrants that during those years were just beginning to include Italy into their migratory trails.

The peculiarity of this area from an urban point of view, were already evident at the time of its original design that goes back to the first decade of the XXth century.

Distinct from the urban chaotic developments which have characterised other parts of

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<sup>1</sup> The Municipality of Rome is divided into 22 administrative units called *Municipi*. The VIIth *Municipio*, is constituted by the union of 8 different neighbourhoods: Centocelle, Alessandrino, Tor Sapienza - Quatticciolo, La Rustica, Tor Tre Teste, Casetta Mistica, Centro Direzionale and Via dell'Omo.

the city, Centocelle (the original historical nucleus at least) represented a completely different idea of urban planning.

At the beginning and until the 1940's, Centocelle's urban plan will be inspired by the so called Garden Cities.

This innovative model, was created by British social reformer E. Howard (1946), and can be summarised with the general idea of a city built *at man's measure*.

The central idea at the base of this project, was that cities ought to be preserved from both overcrowding and congestion, and the countryside from abandon. Garden Cities were conceived to be self sufficient and with a maximum population of 32.000 individuals. The scheme included roads, railways, markets, all built in accordance with the principles of this new urban philosophy<sup>2</sup>.

These ideal cities should be surrounded by greenbelts in an effort to maintain an equilibrium between the city and the countryside<sup>3</sup>.

In Italy this approach was encouraged and favoured by the promulgation of the so called Giolitti<sup>4</sup> Law of 1904. This law '... instituted a property tax for land parcels likely to be built on. The intention was to encourage building in a regular manner, (as opposed to an oil-stain pattern) and lower the cost of extending sewers, streets and street lighting ...' (Agnew, 1995, p. 46).

With specific regard to Centocelle, the application of this model found its expression in the initial parcellisation of land, entrusted to a certain number of familiar groups. These small villas, that were the original style of construction, were meant to serve as residences for the military personnel in force at the airport.

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<sup>2</sup> The principles of the garden cities is visible in UK in two important realisation of this urban idea, the cities of Letchworth and Hampstead, built by R. Unwin under the guidance of the same Howard.

<sup>3</sup> In Rome a similar urban idea can be seen in places such as the *Città Giardino* in Montesacro, in Garbatella and few other Roman neighbourhoods.

<sup>4</sup> Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928), Italian politician and former Prime Minister.

During the 20's there were 21 families registered, to each of whom were entrusted in all 1,5 Ha. onto which small villas, all furnished with private orchards, were to be built. In 1925 the construction of the S. Felice da Cantalice church was completed, at the end of via dei Castani, that since then, became the ideal centre of this small suburban hamlet.

In the decade following the Unity, Centocelle begun its transformation from rural enclave to city periphery, following the construction of the military Airport "F. Baracca".

This landscape remained more or less unchanged until the building fever of the post-war years.

After the 1920's, the building style of the confining neighbourhoods who have been built later (Tor Sapienza, La Rustica etc.) will be no longer built at man's measure, but under the heavy, incessant influence of the builders interests.

As Mudu points out: '... After the Second World War the "bucolic" aspect of the neighbourhood ... was altered by a rapid urbanisation and many of the small villas were substituted by tall popular buildings. The neighbourhood gained its new definitive structure, centred on Piazza dei Mirti along the axis of via dei Castani in connection with via Casilina and Prenestina instead of the historical one of via Tor de' Schiavi' (Mudu, 2006, p. 28).

In the following years, two large roads were built to connect the Casilina and Prenestina, viale Palmiro Togliatti and viale della Primavera. All along these roads arose the huge square popular residential buildings, that would soon become so common in all the Roman modern peripheries, and also Centocelle, the former Garden City, became surrounded by the approaching town.

From this short historical introduction it is now possible to add other interesting elements that have made this neighbourhood's history so peculiar and different from that of others.

First of all, its geographic position. It is placed straddling between two important consular roads, via Prenestina and via Casilina. In second place, the Airports existence and the activities related with it, have guaranteed since the early townships, the presence of bus and train connections with the inner city.

In short, while the other Roman suburbs and *borgate* were built in total lack of infrastructures and transports, and were characterised by isolation, overcrowding and urban degradation, Centocelle represented an exception, just due to the elements quoted above.

#### **5.1.1 Centocelle's socio-demographic data**

From the demographic point of view, after the Second World War, Rome faced an impressive increase in its population due to the already quoted internal migratory movements that displaced a large number of people from other region's countrysides (mainly from the south and central Italy) toward Rome and the north.

To this already large group of people, we must also add a great number of Roman citizens evicted from their former homes in the historical centre due to the massive destruction of entire sectors of the inner city that I have already presented in par. 4.1. This increasing mass of families and individuals, were destined to be settled in the new, popular housing of the newly built peripheral neighbourhoods, thus leaving the more profitable areas of the historical centre to the upper middle classes.

In spite of its original project as garden city, Centocelle soon changed his characteristics. Rather than the former plan of a middle class technician's small enclave, it soon became one of the many Roman peripheries, composed by strong percentages of immigrants especially from Abruzzo, Molise and the South of Italy, mixed with poor Romans. They were pushed all together first into bidonvilles and shanty towns, and later, into the new ghettos of the popular buildings.

As for what regards the social composition and demographic data, we can see that in the decade 1951 - 1961 the resident population grew rapidly in numbers, due to the phenomenon of Italian internal migrations already described (see Chapter Four).

In the decade following the end of the Second World War a series of informal dwellings begun to rise in the whole Rome, and especially in the most peripheral parts of the VIIth District. The high presence of internal migrants, and the consequent request for accommodations gave origin to some of the most known historical informal townships in Rome: Quarticciolo and Acquadotto Felice (Agnew, 1995, p.106), widely studied by the Italian sociologist Franco Ferrarotti<sup>5</sup> and his team.

Data collected during the 1981 census shows that nearly 30% of the total resident population was born in regions other than Lazio (Mudu, 2006). This data confirms the neighbourhood role as a preferred destination for the internal Italian migrants.

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<sup>5</sup> See Bibliography.



*Tab.5.1: 1981: Resident population in the VIIth District according to the region of birth.*

<b>Region of Origin</b>	<b>Resident Population</b>
Piemonte	327
Valle D'Aosta	18
Liguria	260
Lombardia	770
Trentino Alto Adige	137
Veneto	929
Friuli Venezia Giulia	473
Emilia Romagna	900
Marche	3.934
Toscana	1.439
Umbria	2.713
Lazio	95.652
Campania	5.314
Abruzzi	5.910
Molise	1.505
Puglia	4.248
Basilicata	1.000
Calabria	5.082
Sicilia	3.944
Sardegna	1.659
Total	136.214

Source: ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics), XIIIth population census, 1995.

During the 80's the neighbourhood experienced another transformation and since the early 90's started to become the favourite location for the growth of many newly built informal townships, or by the re-population of some of the older ones (Quarticciole for example). This time these new dwellings were not occupied by Italian internal migrants, but by immigrants coming from our most immediate peripheries: the Balkans and the Maghreb.

As I have said, a multiplicity of elements has acted as push factors toward this District. One element is the one that concerns the good connections with public transport from Centocelle to the city centre, a historical characteristic that acquired more importance with the passing of the years and the disordered growth of Rome and of its periphery. In distinction to other similarly peripheral places, Centocelle had never experienced the complete lack of infrastructure and isolation that afflicted other newly built

neighbourhoods such as for example, just to quote the most famous, Pietralata or Portonaccio.

The implementation of infrastructure and transport services could maybe appear obvious to a non Italian person, but in Rome it is an historical constant that of building entire new neighbourhoods without first supplying them with transport services, sewers and sometimes even garbage collecting. This is the reason for which the many connections (train and buses) from Centocelle to the inner city represent an attractive factor for those who choose to live in that place.

Also, the former historical presence of large informal dwellings and shanty towns, provoked a phenomenon of “relocation” in these same dwellings. The former Italian inhabitants during the years have abandoned these shanty towns and progressively moved into popular houses. Shanty towns though, had not been destroyed, but were instead occupied by the newly arrived international migrants, to whom the few Italians left, rented or sold their former huts<sup>6</sup>. The decline of the Airport, and its partial closing down in the late 60’s, offered a large portion of free and apparently unclaimed land that attracted, as we will see further on, also different groups of Roma people in search of a place where to settle.

Lastly, it must be registered that all along the viale Palmiro Togliatti there is an intensive and historical presence of both *smorzi*<sup>7</sup> and car junkyards<sup>8</sup>.

This last data is important, because the *smorzi* constitute an important source of occupation in the building industry for many migrants, while the presence of the car

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<sup>6</sup> The Maghrebi settlement “Douar Bailill”, quoted here in Chapter Six, used to be the former Quarticciolo bidonville, inhabited by homeless Italians. On these “relocations”, see Agnew, 1995, pp. 126-128.

<sup>7</sup> Places where building materials are sold, and which are often used by the immigrants in search of a daily job as builders. There are many along via Palmiro Togliatti, and it is normal to see foreigners standing in queue offering their work wearing around their neck a placard with their daily wages.

<sup>8</sup> The VIIth District registers the highest number of car junkyards. Their overall number is more than a quarter of all the car junkyards in Rome.

junkyards is a central element to Roma economy of recycling. For the same reason, also the former destitute Italians that were originally living in the neighbourhood, resorted to this possibility of temporary employment into one of the many car junkyards shops.

The other factor of attraction for migrants was the fact that since the early 60's the area had been home to many small industrial settlements, placed along the two roads of via dell'Omo and Tor Sapienza. Although we can not speak of a "proper" industrial area<sup>9</sup> with large factories and companies, but instead, of a more typical Italian model, that of small and medium enterprises, for the large part depending for their existence on the commissions coming from the few larger factories situated in the Tiburtina Valley<sup>10</sup> and those situated in the Casilina – Prenestina areas.

Another element which acted as a pull factor has been that of the relative cheapness for real estate renting prices, especially when compared with the rest of the city. Centocelle, until the explosion of the real estate market in Rome in the year 2000, was considered as a peripheral area. Even today while I write (2009), the real estate market in this area is still at an affordable level, especially when compared with other Roman locations.

Today in Rome, many neighbourhoods that were once considered as "popular" have undergone a severe transformation due to the continuous expansion of the city.

San Lorenzo, Pigneto and Garbatella, all former working class areas, have become the new fashionable "villages", crowded with clubs and night bar. These changes have

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<sup>9</sup> The only Roman industrial area was created during the 60's along via Tiburtina, the so called *Tiburtina Valley*. Today also this industrial area has been abandoned and the buildings either rented as storage or dismantled and left to decay.

<sup>10</sup> As Agnew underlined: '... the early 1990's saw a downturn in employment in the *Tiburtina Valley*. Some of this was due to the onset of a world-wide recession and a decline in demand, particularly from the Italian Ministry of Defense. But some was due to a switch in investment by local entrepreneurs into the Roman property market in which they could gain rates of return one hundred times superior to those in manufacturing. Rather than restructuring their industries, the temptation of building speculation offered an easier solution ...' (Agnew, 1995, p. 88).

Among these former industrial settlement must be remembered the most important: Alenia, Voxson and Apollon.

caused the migration of the former population who were living in these areas toward other more peripheral and more affordable neighbourhoods, while young people, students, intellectuals and artists replaced the original human *milieu*.

Centocelle has not yet undergone such a visible change, but the near future in store for this area will not differ much from the ones I have quoted here above, if earlier trends are repeated.

### **5.1.2 The Centocelle airport and the Roma arrival**

The history of the area where the encampment is situated goes a long time back in the past, and long before the Roma arrival in the 90's.

In this paragraph, I will give an overview of this location, since its destination of use and its population has changed several times during the decades until present days.

This place originally was, during the Roman period, one of the places for the numerous *pozzolana*<sup>11</sup> caves near the city. Subsequently, it became also the official residence of important Roman noble families who established their properties there, in a period situated at the beginning of the VIth century B.C.

These families built in the surroundings rich and magnificent *villas* and of several Roman military encampments (*castrum*) (Volpe and Huyzendveld, 2004).

For centuries therefore, the settlement was densely populated and well alive, but during the VIth century A.C., following the general decline of the Empire, the *villas* were abandoned, the population of the *castrum* disbanded, and the whole area was left to be covered with vegetation and debris.

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<sup>11</sup> *Pozzolana* is a mineral used for building which is traditional in Rome due to its abundance.

During the middle ages it had been occupied by shepherds and farmers, and its strategical and productive importance declined even more, although both via Casilina and via Prenestina remained always as important arteries of connection between southern, central and northern Italy.

For this reason, along the Casilina road the ancient Roman *stationes* were not abandoned, but instead replaced by the middle ages *locande*, which offered refreshments, food and accomodations to the travellers directed toward the South. Until the year of the Italian unification, the place was left untouched, surrounded by wilderness and ruins of Roman artifacts and monuments, and largely used as pasture or as subject for the watercolours and sketches of the intellectual, European tourists<sup>12</sup>.

Around the end of the 19th century, a military airport was built on the terrain, the “Aereoporto Francesco Baracca”. Searching through the visual archive of the Italian “Istituto Luce” is possible to find various images of the place: in the year 1909 Wright arrives there with its small biplane, in 1923 and 1927, is the place of arrival of the first soviet plane ever landed in Italy.<sup>13</sup>

In the years between the two wars the place became more and more important to the increasing warfare activities. Several aviators and other pilots are portrayed while leaving or arriving there, as documented in the Airports actual website.<sup>14</sup>

In the fascist period the importance and the usefulness of this structure reached its peak. In many visual documents, fascists *gerarchi*<sup>15</sup> are filmed while leaving or arriving at this airport, often accompanied by members of the Roman aristocracy or other

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<sup>12</sup> See for example the sketches and paintings of the Roman countryside left by both J. W. v. Goethe and of D. A. F. De Sade, to quote only the most famous.

<sup>13</sup> Archivio Storico e Fotografico dell’Istituto Luce, Roma, “Aviatori di Russia” (1923) and “Primo aeroplano sovietico giunto in Italia” (1927).

<sup>14</sup> Aeroporto F. Baracca [online]. Available from: <http://www.difesa.it/CaSMD/COI/La+sede.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> *Gerarchi* was the name of the fascist party officials.

preminent public persons. Other documents from the “Istituto Luce” are showing Mussolini with his son Bruno while receiving their pilots licence at this very Airport.<sup>16</sup>

It appears again in 1937, as a place for the welcoming of both African and Italian troops<sup>17</sup> and as a place for the fascist adunances and parades<sup>18</sup> then, as a last document, it is here that the first flight from Rome to Berlin starts.<sup>19</sup>

After the end of the war, the strategic importance of this airport declined rapidly, and the area was progressively abandoned, including the huge structures that were built within (the Fort, Hangars etc.). The airport closed down and remains nowadays only as an administrative centre for the Army and as a Head Office for the COI (COI, Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze). The former structures (mostly hangars) are crumbled and rusted while the oldest Fort<sup>20</sup> is still partially interred and in a complete state of decay.

During the 1950's the Military authorities gave to the Municipality of Rome 36 ha. out of the total 120, and the area has been designated as part of the SDO<sup>21</sup> project, but after the discovery of important relics of Roman Imperial age<sup>22</sup> and the intervention of the Archaeological superintendence, 80 ha. of this area are on their way of being

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<sup>16</sup> Archivio Storico e Fotografico dell'Istituto Luce, Roma, Giornale Luce B0472, 05/1934 and B0686, 29/5/1935.

<sup>17</sup> Archivio Storico e Fotografico dell'Istituto Luce, Roma, Giornale Luce B1092 12/05/1937; “L'accampamento delle truppe africane”, Giornale Luce B1084, 28/04/1937.

<sup>18</sup> Archivio Storico e Fotografico dell'Istituto Luce, Roma Giornale Luce B0986, “La celebrazione della virtù guerriera”.

<sup>19</sup> Archivio Storico e Fotografico dell'Istituto Luce, Giornale Luce A0776, Maggio 1931.

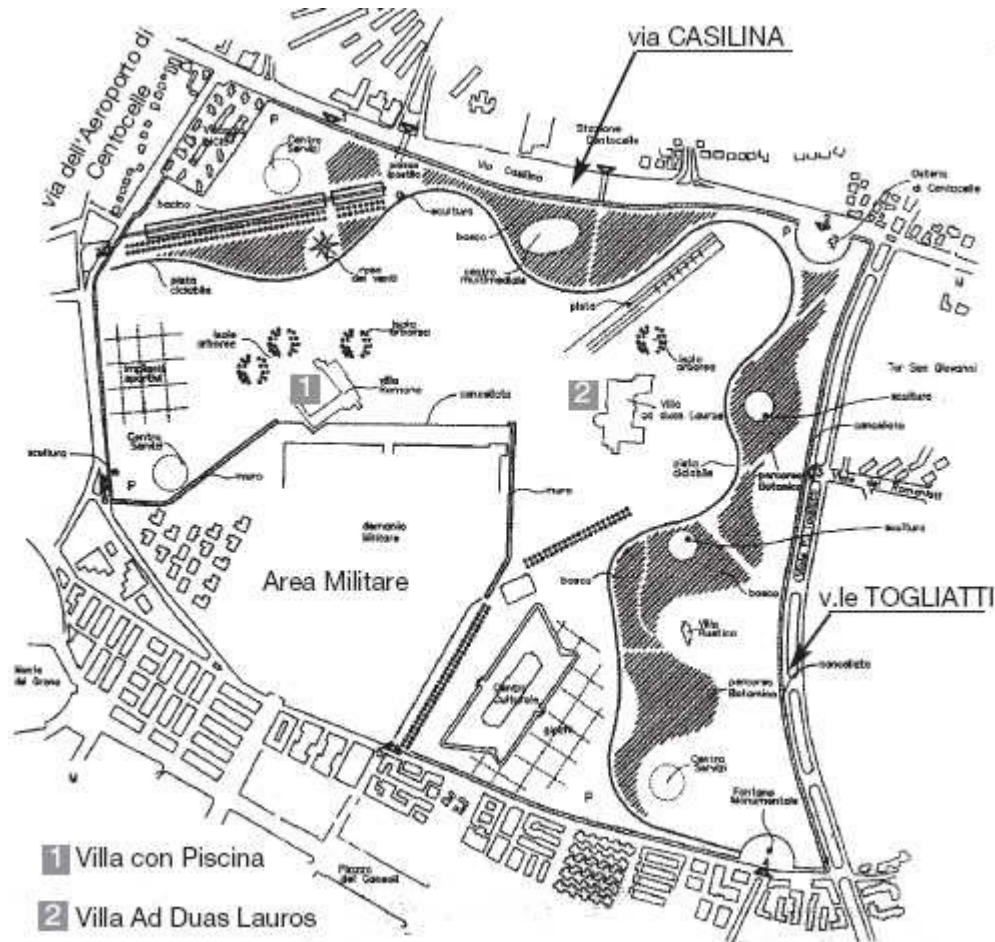
<sup>20</sup> Forte di Centocelle, like Forte Prenestino, Forte Antenne, Forte Bravetta etc. are a series of Forts built during the First World War by the Savoian Kings armies. Many are still used as barracks (Forte Bravetta), military jails (Forte Boccea), squatted social centre (Forte Prenestino) etc.

<sup>21</sup> SDO (Sistema Direzionale Orientale) is an urbanistic project for viability based on the Law 396/90 “Roma Capitale”.

<sup>22</sup> The “*Villa ad duas lauros*”, property of Emperor Costantino's mother and also place of residence of the 100 elite emperors' knights. Stables, called “*centum cellae*”, were also associated to this complex (from where the name of the neighbourhood comes from).

transformed into a Park within the archaeological site<sup>23</sup>. In 1999 the first effective steps were taken for the urbanistic regeneration of this area.

Map 5.1: The area of the airport and the location of the archaeological sites.



Source: Abitare A, *Speciale Parco Archeologico Centocelle*, Rome, April 2003.

For decades, the largest portion of the area has been completely abandoned, until in 1991 some Roma Montenegrin families, coming from a nearby encampment<sup>24</sup> arrived at the former airport and started to build there their own huts.

<sup>23</sup> Sovrintendenza di Roma, (2005) **Aree archeologiche. Il progetto comparto di Centocelle** [online]. Available from:

[http://www.sovrintendenzaroma.it/i\\_luoghi/roma\\_antica/aree\\_archeologiche/scavi\\_archeologici\\_allo\\_s\\_d\\_o\\_1/il\\_progetto/comparto\\_di\\_centocelle](http://www.sovrintendenzaroma.it/i_luoghi/roma_antica/aree_archeologiche/scavi_archeologici_allo_s_d_o_1/il_progetto/comparto_di_centocelle) [Accessed February 2009].

<sup>24</sup> This other encampment was the “Casilino 900”. It was placed only a few metres from where the “Casilino 700” was. It was inhabited by 130 Roma families according to the data given to me by the

They moved out from their original dwelling (situated less than one kilometer away from the Casilino 700) because of a parental fight which forced them to leave their original informal encampment.

After one year, in 1992, the first Roma Xoraxanè group fleeing from Bosnia arrived in the area, and finding the place fit to live in while in total lack of other opportunities, settled there, thus giving life to a small informal village.

## **5.2 Casilino 700: spatial organisation of the survival**

It is quite difficult to give an account of the appearance of the area without using visual documentation, for this reason this paragraph contains photographs of the place gathered during the fieldwork that can be useful to have an idea of this space.

There were two entrances to the encampment. One from via Casilina, crossing the field and the other was along via di Centocelle.

The encampment was opposite to many other Roman shanty towns. These tended to be as hidden as possible, and had generally very small and nearly invisible access paths.

During the first two years Casilino 700 was fully visible from the main Casilina road.

The land was bare and flat. The few high trees could be found only to the right of the via Casilina's entrance, while the rest was a dry yellowed steppa.

During autumn and winter seasons, splotches of green vegetation appeared here and there like atolls in a sea of mud and water puddles. To cross longitudinally the encampment for all its length by feet meant that when arriving at the other side, feet and ankles were soaked with mud and with splashes up to knee height.

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Ministry of Interior in 2004 and it has been destroyed in January 2009 (See in detail Picture 5.8 and for a larger image including also the Airport area see in Chapter Eight Picture 8.5). It was one of the encampments that the Municipality of Rome destroyed according to the 2009 "Piano Nomadi" (see par. 4.3.2 note 78).



In summer, being deprived of any tree shade, the area became a desert, the earth cracked and because of the frequent episodes of fires, the only vegetation was made of a tall wild brownish grass.

*Picture 5.1: Huts as they were visible from via Casilina. Rome, 1995.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

From 1992 to 1997 the encampment had no water supply, except for the 6.000 litres that the Municipality of Rome was delivering there with a tank wagon every morning.

According to the technicians of the Agency for Rubbish collection (AMA) of Rome, the problem was the size of the encampment. Because of that, both lorries with the water supplies stopped only at the beginning of the settlement, and being deprived of any sound or light advice system many of the inhabitants never heard it arriving. The service was therefore limited only to the first huts, the one closest to the encampments entrance.

After the partial evacuation in 1996, the situation shifted: the tank-wagon stopped only opposite to where it stopped before, serving only the other part of the encampment.

*Picture 5.2: The arrival of the Municipality of Rome's water tank at "Casilino 700". Rome, 1994.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

Besides, this water was chemically cleaned, and Roma refused to drink it because of its chlorine flavour. For this, and for all the other reasons stated, water for general use was gathered at the neighbourhood's public fountains (very common in Rome). One of these fountains was in Piazzale delle Camelie (nearly one kilometer from the encampment). The other, the nearest one, was situated in Via degli Angeli (500 mt.).

Plastic tanks were filled and carried in different ways. They could be pushed into vans or carried by feet with the help of baby carriages or strollers that Roma women never use for children but used them instead as a sort of big shopping bag with wheels for

carrying water, goods, dresses and other objects picked up during the “*search*” or while market shopping.

In the summer of 1994 the Municipality of Rome started a campaign for the gathering of funds to rebuild water pipes in Sarajevo, but in vain the encampments inhabitants (most of them from Sarajevo itself) asked the same Municipality to carry out the installation of a small public fountain.

In July 1997, the NGO’s Médecins Sans Frontières, who had a small project at Casilina 700, succeeded in having two water reservoirs installed, one for each entrance. However, the service remained largely insufficient for peoples needs, and public fountains continued to be used assiduously.

The chronic lack of water and services of any kind, caused serious health and hygiene problems and can certainly be considered as one of the factors responsible for the difficulties in the successful schooling of children<sup>25</sup>.

Rats were a worrying problem, especially for the weakest sectors of the encampments population such as children and older people: episodes of rat bites were very frequent and caused serious health problems. A report made by Mauro Cristaldi, Professor of Comparative Anatomy at the University of Rome “La Sapienza” and an international expert in rodent infestations, estimated the number of rats at 300 units per ha. (Cristaldi, 1996). Data about possible dangers caused by the rodent infestation were sent, together with a general situation report during the August of 1995, both to the city’s health authorities and to the Mayor of Rome<sup>26</sup>, but in spite of the request for a quick intervention nothing has ever been made to confront the emergency, leaving the Roma to cope as they could with the problem.

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<sup>25</sup> See par. 7.4.2, Minka, Sejdo and Elio interviews.

<sup>26</sup> Francesco Rutelli at that time.

The conservation of food was another important problem: the encampment had neither electricity nor water and refrigerators were therefore impossible to keep. Only very few families had electricity generators.

The strategy was to suspend the food with ropes secured to the roof or to keep them closed into chest (this later possibility was less used since rodents are perfectly able to excavate and gnaw the woods chest and reach the food anyway).

The large space in front of the hut was kept free and it was used for both social and working activities. On the rear and laterally were visible huge heaps of different materials (in particular metal and wood, but also furnitures and other objects) that were gathered on the public dustbin discharge in and around Rome and then transported to the encampment to be cleaned, fixed and resold.

*Picture 5.3: Xoraxanè Roma during the “searching”.*



Source: Courtesy of Monia Cappuccini.



*Picture 5.4: Xoraxanè Roma at the Roman market in via Collatina. Rome, January 2007.*



Source: Photo courtesy of Sucardrom: <http://www.sucardrom.eu/>

To the many occasional visitors and to passers by, these heaps of stuff were just another evidence of Roma's natural propensity to dirtiness. Actually, it was only the fruit of the main economic activity of this group.

*Picture 5.5: Wood gathering at the encampment.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

*Picture 5.6: Different materials are gathered during the searches and taken to the encampment to be fixed and sold.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

During the years there has never been a regular rubbish collection. The layout of the area, its largeness, and the dispersion of the huts over the whole territory made “door-to-door” collection impossible and the two huge rusty containers placed at the encampment, remained completely full, and for long time without any cleaning.

The situation was further worsened by the continuous arrival of Italian building workers who instead of discarding their work debris in the proper designated place, paying a Municipality fee for it, preferred to throw them totally illegally and straight into the Roma encampment.

This accumulation produced the formation of small and sometimes big debris pyramids which only helped in worsening the hygienic situation, giving to the place a further depressing and spectral aspect.

*Picture 5.7: Building debris discarded at the encampment.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

Rubbish would often been burned in huge fires which produced pillars of black dense and poisonous smoke because of the various materials thrown into the flames, especially plastic materials, whose burning originates dioxin. Fires were also used as a quick technique to separate rubber from copper in the electrical wires gathered during the *searches*.

This way of getting rid of the garbage provoked the reaction of the inhabitants of the “Casilino 23”, a popular housing residence which faced the dwelling from the other side of via Casilina. During the eight years of life of this encampment, the inhabitants of these building complexes, organised several public demonstrations against the Roma presence in the area.

The two main roads which crossed the encampment longitudinally were periodically scattered with *brecciolino*<sup>27</sup> a senseless and expensive practice whose absurdity became evident after the first rains in autumn, when the *brecciolino* was literally eaten by the surrounding mud and by the continuous passage of both humans and vans.

Toilets were self built using the natural configuration of the area. Before 1994 the huts were placed in correspondence with an old unused rail whose rails ran some 20 metres below the level of the encampment.

These small structures were precariously built all along the cliffs and at some distance from the informal houses. They had been used until the year 2000's forced evacuation. Only in 1993 six toilet tents were placed in different parts of the field, but their scarce number and random placement only created more conflictual feelings among the population, in a situation already at limits.

Some of the families had also built a sort of shed to keep things found during the "search".

I can still remember the expression of surprise on some policemen's face during the first partial evacuation of the encampment which took place in 1994. They wanted Fikreta and Hrustem, a young Roma couple, to open their shed, hoping to find probably some stolen property, and since both were evidently too slow for Polices standards, the door was crashed with force. The discovery of the big treasure hidden inside revealed thousands of second hand shoes. The commerce that the couple was practising for living was gathering, adjusting and reselling them at the local second hand market.

Another important usage for the space in front of the hut was the ceremonial one. Births, marriages, funerals and other religious happenings invariably took place here.

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<sup>27</sup> *Brecciolino* is a typical Roman paving. It is composed of small white round river stones, normally used for public *villas*.



The area had to be big enough for the long tables which would host the guest to the ceremony, another part would have been left free for the musicians and the dance area. These spaces are not to be considered collective. They belonged to the family who built and inhabited them, in order to provide each family with its own ceremonial and social space.

This paragraph is now urban social history, because Casilino 700 has been destroyed, but informal dwellings grows rapidly, and the picture below shows how other encampments have soon taken its place, only one kilometer away in the same neighbourhood.

*Picture 5.8: Another informal encampment along via Casilina ("Casilino 900"), a few hundred meters away from the former Casilino 700. July 2007.*



Source: Google Earth. July 2007.

### 5.3 Social and family relationships

Although totally desolate and barren, this area had its advantages, especially for Roma when considering their economic activities and life habits.

The first important aspect was the possibility of having enough room to build small warehouses and sheds in which to keep the goods for sale.

This was very important considering that these goods can be of small dimension like garments and small furnitures found in dustbins, or very cumbersome, like metal and wood scraps. The second important aspect was the encampment proximity and the transport connections with the city centre.

As it is in the case of many other shanty town dwellers, Roma's informal activities needs to be close to the inner city, especially for women, whose economic activities are based on the vicinity to local markets and on the relationship with the local population<sup>28</sup>. Here lies one of the main reasons for which Roma refuse to be moved out of Rome and into small rural villages, because of the impossibility to engage in their everyday's small commerces.<sup>29</sup>

Another consideration is tied to Roma's social structure, where the vastness of the area allowed to build self built homes of a dimension compatible with their extended families. In this way the space was also used to ratify the physical and relational nearness or the distance with the other familiar groups.

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<sup>28</sup> This aspect has been exhaustively described and analysed by Davis (2006) in relation to the Hong Kong case of institutional urban planning in favor of the inhabitants of a large shanty town. The local inhabitants refused to move into newly built peripheral buildings because of the 'incompatibility between the elevated peripheral buildings and the social structures and the informal economics of the poor communities' (Davis, 2006, p. 63).

<sup>29</sup> The proposal of evacuation and dismemberment of the Roma encampments existing up to date, with the consequent transferral of their inhabitants to small rural centres in the proximity of Rome has been presented by local institutions such as Lazio Region, Province of Rome and Municipality of Rome during public reunions held the 13th and 20th March 2007. These proceedings, and the general policies adopted will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Roma's houses were huts, built with great competence and ability and apparently randomly dispersed on the whole area. Great attention was given to the choice of the building site spot and large extended families tended to stick together with those familiar groups with which they were related.

*Picture 5.9: Aerial photograph of the encampment. In between the football fields are visible the huts and paths that Roma formed with their coming and going.*



Source: Concession of S.A.R.A. Nistri Rome. (Conc. S.M.A.N. 22/0189 of the 16/09/94. Flight of the 3/4 August 1994. Authorized for scientific purposes).

In this aerial picture the area occupied by the self made constructions and camping vans is visible, also visible were the small earthy roads left by the continuous passage of people, cars and vans. The photograph also shows the dimension and shape (generally circular or semi circular) of every extended family's dwelling and the relationships within the larger groups. Family and friends were obviously kept closer.

The first official census of this encampment was made on 24/11/1995. Data were recorded by officers of the VIIth NAE<sup>30</sup> Group of the Rome Municipality Police and Civil Servants from the Rome Special Office for Immigration (USI). It registered a number of 927 persons for a total of 250 family groups. It was considered to be the largest informal Roma encampment in the whole Europe.

During 1996 a second census registered 1200 persons coming from (in order of numerical consistence) Bosnian, Montenegrins, Romanians, Macedonians and the small Moroccan atoll pointed out before.

Each hut was occupied by a familiar group, and at short distance (more or less 20 metres) were placed the huts of other members of the same extended family. The inner space was generally composed of a great room serving both as a kitchen and a salon. Behind this large space in some cases were one or two rooms used as bedrooms separated by a door from the first room.

Very often the partitions would also have windows, also gathered in rubbish heaps, and decorated with small curtains or photographs.

Another small area was a sort of *patio* that was used as a storage for various materials and as a place to work within the “property”. The *patio* often was surrounded by various objects and materials erected all around and arranged in a way to resemble a fence.

This served to protect the hut from incidents like car crashes<sup>31</sup> or simple trespassers; we have to remind that during all the years in which the encampment had existed, there has never been any kind of systematic control either by Police or Carabinieri, who only

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<sup>30</sup> For an explanation of NAE’s duties see par. 3.5.2, note 20.

<sup>31</sup> In spite of the many requests made at that time both by me and other scholars and volunteers working in the encampment, it has never had a thorough control by the Police; thus becoming a centre for the selling of stolen goods.

arrived in cases of crimes or during the evictions. The organisation of security was therefore entirely left to the Roma families.

During the summer season *patios* were also used to cook with their small self made ovens. These ovens were the first cause for the many fires occurred during the years, but in winter the weather was so cold that Roma had to face the choice of risking suffocation from fumes from bonfire, or risking their children life because of the cold.<sup>32</sup>

Rooms were about 20 square mt. each, depending on the family size and wealth and on the kind of material at hand.

Huts were constructed on large wooden poles upon which were built platforms at a height of 30-40 cm. up from the ground level, to make it more difficult for rats to climb it and assault children or food and to protect the inhabitants from the terrains humidity.

For this reason the food leftovers were always thrown away from the hut, to avoid attracting more rodents.

Anthropologists have studied extensively the different attitudes of both sedentaries and nomadic people, toward the utilisation of the environment they are living in.

The kind of use of the territory is very typical of nomadic people and similar to our case concerning the Roma community. Opposite to the sedentaries, nomads exploit intensively the territory on which they have temporarily settled. They know that after their departure, the place will take its time to recover; including grass to re-grow and rubbish and other kind of leftovers will have the time to complete the decomposition process (Calabrò, 1993, p. 28). The processes of natural decomposition have always took care of these “ecological” aspects, but with the diffusion of plastics and other non

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<sup>32</sup> Both fire and cold had been the causes for the tragedies who took place at the encampment during the years 1998 and 1999. See par. 8.4.

biodegradable materials, this old nomadic habits has been mistaken by sedentaries and it constitutes one of the reasons for the frequent arguments with the Italian residents.

The interior of these dwellings reflected the economic activities of their occupants. Being professional recyclers and second-hand dealers, Roma are also extraordinary crafters. Many objects, thrown out and discarded by the *gadjos*<sup>33</sup> were collected and rearranged through incessant creative interventions, mechanical and decorative.

Many of these constructions, though precarious and derived from discharged material, had nonetheless an artistic quality.

Ms. Nura's hut for example was decorated by many flowers and plants that were given to her as a present from the "Casilino 23" market florist. The effect was stunning, but hers was not the only one. Another of the housing structure was the "*kampina*" (camping van in *Romanès*). The *kampina* was placed in the area in front of the "Mother Hut" and was generally occupied by young girls who wished to avoid the forced intimacy of the bigger huts (Rossi, 2005, pp.165-166).

We have to consider the average size of a Roma family as composed by a number of people varying from a minimum of three (very rare) to a maximum of 10-15 individuals and we can easily understand the need for adolescent girls to have a place of their own separated by their younger and male brothers.

This *kampina* are a good example of what can be called a Romani aesthetics: Silvana and her sisters had their van completely occupied by mini-dolls hanging from the roof and every small space was crowded with handmade crochet work and embroideries.

In spite of the difficulties of washing and cleaning everything properly. Roma girls managed to keep their *kampina* as clean as a real home. We have to remember that these

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<sup>33</sup> *Gadjo* (m., sing.) is the Romani word for any non-Roma person.

people were living in Bosnia in normal houses, and they had to re-learn how to live in huts when they arrived in Italy.

Picture 5.10: A woman prepares lunch outside her hut.



Source: Photo by the Author.

The house of the S. family looked like a tiny Swiss *villa*. It was made of wooden logs polished with flatting and surrounded by Christmas trees discarded by *gadjos* and partly coming from the same florist who gave the flowers to Nura. It was an explosion of green pine planted all around. This, combined with the woods and plants surrounding the hut, gave the observer the impression of being in a place somewhere near Vaud.



*Picture 5.11: The S. Family in front of their hut.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

Another hut was decorated with red and yellow stripes of adhesive tape which composed a geometrical decoration on the outside walls. To the right is possible to see one of the small shed used to store the objects gathered during the *searches*.

*Picture 5.12: Decorated hut.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

The owners of the hut of the following picture were very proud of their work and posed for my camera. In the same picture are also recognisable some of the objects gathered during the *searches* (a round wooden table, a mirror etc.). To the left it is visible the handmade oven where Roma cook, managing even in such harsh conditions, to bake fresh bread everyday.

*Picture 5.13: Another hut in the Casilino 700.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

The interiors of the huts were covered with carpets and rugs, a distant heritage of the Ottoman style. Furniture was scarce and also recycled; one of the most commonly used piece present in each dwelling was one or two big chests, normally containing provisions like food or dresses.

*Picture 5.14: Behara's home.*



Source: Photo by the Author

#### **5.4 External relations: the Romans and the Roma**

During my fieldwork<sup>34</sup> I have met many new and old Centocelle residents, interviewing them on the issues related to the presence of both immigrants and Roma in the neighbourhood.

Part of these interviews was recorded during my participation to a multidisciplinary research on Centocelle realised by the University of Rome “La Sapienza”. In particular the interviews had been administered to ageing people who frequented the Social Centre for Elders “Sandro Pertini”, situated in via degli Aceri.

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<sup>34</sup> This material will not be used here since it has been already published, but further on this paragraph I will quote and report the findings, which collide exactly with the ones I have gathered for this work.

I will use these interviews only quoting them as a second hand source since some excerpts have already been published in the book which presented the research findings<sup>35</sup>. They are important because they show the differences of feeling toward Roma communities, when comparing young people and elder residents

Apart from these materials, I have personally collected twenty interviews, mostly to the young people that, like it often happen in Rome, used as a meeting place a street corner in via dei Castani, the main Centocelle road.

Other interviews have been gathered among various workers and traders that due to their long time presence in the neighbourhood have had the occasion of meeting Roma people from the Casilino 700 encampment.

My intention was that of collecting material on the state of ethnic relations among Roma and non Roma in Centocelle.

What do residents think about Roma and on their condition? What impressions arose from this contact? How do they act, and think toward this group? When I begun this part of the fieldwork, I was prepared to hear the worst. Prejudice against Roma people is so widespread that I was sure I would find some clear indicators of it. The results have shown a situation far more complex than I had previously thought

But I do not intend to anticipate my conclusions and inferences before entering into the analysis of the data. I will report here excerpts from these interviews, and provide the analysis after the report of quotations.

The first place where I went, was the Bar situated a few hundred meters from the encampment, at the corner between via Casilina and via di Centocelle, and assiduously frequented by Roma. Antonio, 39 years old, is the owner. He was born in Centocelle,

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<sup>35</sup> De Angelis, R. and Mignella Calvosa, F. (eds.) (2006) **La Periferia Perfetta**. Roma: Franco Angeli.

and inherited the Bar by his father. He has been living in the neighbourhood for all his life.

In his interviews he spoke about the encampment, stating that the most relevant problem is the one related to Roma's living conditions. Particular worries were expressed on the health problems that could arise within the encampment and in the whole area for the continuous smoke produced by Roma's daily economic activities<sup>36</sup>. Another of the problems was the frequency of small theft perpetrated at his shop that made him afraid of having large groups of Roma hanging outside his Bar:

**Antonio:** Early morning... they all come to the Bar, and you can imagine what it means to have fifty *Zingari* with their children into the Bar. I had to shut it down and I said "Sirs, I am sorry I have to close down everything because I am not in the condition to work". You have to stay with your eyes always open, because they steal everything. The children steal everything. The parents take and eat everything and then you have to remove what is left because other people will not buy it. Because they are dirty. ...

**Monica:** Do you have this problem only with the Roma?

**Antonio:** No no, I feel it for all those who creates problem to the ones that lives law abidingly. I have nothing against Roma in particular, and I know it seems a racist discourse but it is not. Look, I can sign it now that if you take to me a clean, honest Roma I will employ him. Because I have another person working with me, and it is now four years, and he is from Bangladesh... India... over there and he is a great person, he is one of the family. Since the day he came here I have registered him legally. *[Picks up some papers from a closet and shows them to me]*. You see how much I am paying for him in employer's contribution? Therefore, since I am requested to do and pay and declare all this, I want that also the rest of the population abides to these rules. ... I do not want to lump everything together, because like everywhere, there are good and bad people, but you see how the Airport area is now? It was the only green place where I could go with my son, and now I have to take him to a Gym. If we have to give them a space let us create it and do it nice and clean, but then they must keep it clean. You must have respect for other people!

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<sup>36</sup> The burning of electrical wires to extract the metal there contained is a diffuse practice among the Roma of many Roman encampments. This habit produces an acrid, strong fume which is very poisonous and which is one of the greatest problems and cause of frictions among Roma and non Roma citizens.

<sup>37</sup> Interview recorded May 1998.



Another interview is the one to Aldo, 50 years old, owner of a car repair shop, whose interview was gathered at a Bar in via dei Glicini. Also this interview begins with general considerations on the near encampment and on Roma. Also Aldo, like the Bar owner quoted before, points out the gravity of the health problems concerning the Casilino 700 area, wondering how could it have been possible that all these people were left in this state of abandon for so long. Another issue emerging from the interview, is that related to the deviant activities in which Roma, always according to him, are involved. He laments the lack of a “desire for work”, an idleness that is supposedly *inborn* into Roma culture.

**Aldo:** ... Do you really believe that they [*the Roma*] have all this willingness of being employed? I do not believe that! And look, it is not a question of racism, because I had a colleague of mine, also a repairman that took with him an Algerian... Moroccan... I do not know where he is from, and I also know this kid and I can tell you that he has a great will of working. Because this is what they do not possess! The goodwill! They are more apt to send their wives and children around begging at the market than to wake up in the morning and go looking for a job. Noooooooo they happily remain in the middle of their rubbish with their children swimming into it!!

**Monica:** That is because you think that for them it is impossible to work! But do you know that in Yugoslavia many of them were working? Some of them even in Italian factories. Like the “Zastava” that produced Fiat industrial vehicles!

**Aldo:** Look, there can be exceptions, I know that, because there is good and bad in every place and every nation, but I am 56 years old, and since when I remember, they have always been like that. Always living in the middle of rubbish, always stealing, always like this ...<sup>38</sup>.

Another interview was directed to two 24 years old Centocelle residents, Giulio and Micio, that I had met in one of the many Pool Salon<sup>39</sup> of the neighbourhood.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview recorded June 1998.

<sup>39</sup> In Centocelle is situated the historical Pool Salon “Il Diamante”, where are concentrated the Roman Carom top players. This apparently insignificant news is instead another indicator of the strong presence of former Italian immigrants from the south, since the pool specialty called Carom is played in Italy almost exclusively in the south, in particular in regions like Calabria and Sicily, where more than three quarters of all the national players come from.

The interview begun with a general consideration about foreigners:

**Monica:** What do you think about foreign immigrants who come to work here in Italy?

**Micio:** Honestly, I never had any occasion of a direct contact with them, but I can think that they leave their countries because they try to seek something better. Anyway I think that we must give them the opportunity to do something.

**Monica:** And when you say “foreigner” who do you think at?

**Micio:** Uhm.. Albanian, Polish, Romanian, Moroccans... all!

**Monica:** And for what concerns the Roma?

**Giulio:** Eh the *Zingari* should be nomads... they should not stay in one place and remain there... they should move around from one side to the other. Only that here they do not move, they remain in one place, and from there they take the occasion of stealing around... I think that nomads should not settle... with the excuse of being nomads they live how they like, send children to steal into apartments... I have heard of *Zingari* driving Ferraris!!!

**Monica:** Are you saying they are dishonest, criminal people?

**Giulio:** Yes I am saying that.

**Monica:** And from where have you formed this opinion? Have you had any direct contact or personal experience?

**Micio:** It is visible everywhere! You can read it everyday in the newspapers! It is not the first time that we read that a *Zingaro* has been found with some stolen cars or other things... They are more skilled in stealing!

**Monica:** And, according to you, how come that they have developed this skill?

**Giulio:** Because they have not got the possibility of getting a regular job! Even Italians do not have regular works! Imagine a *Zingari*!!!

**Monica:** Micio, do you agree with Giulio?

**Micio:** I totally agree with Giulio. *Zingari* are a mass of thieves. They are predators! A people that moves, and when finds a good place to settle they camp and remain there and steal. There are Clans of *Zingari*, and all together they live like this, from hand to mouth daily!

**Monica:** Have you ever had any personal experience you can refer to?  
**Micio:** No. I am basing my ideas on newspapers articles which reports daily of *Zingari* and foreigners selling drugs... stealing... It is very common!

**Monica:** Giulio you also think that the newspapers are a source of reliable information on this issue?

**Giulio:** Well, not always, but you can see that on the daily newspapers there are everyday news like this, and I have also seen some *Zingara* women with their children in the centre of Rome pickpocketing tourists... Then it is widely known that they exploit their children and

send them stealing into apartments because they are small, and can enter any small hole...’’<sup>40</sup>.

The presence of the encampment and its desperate conditions, which have been extensively discussed in the preceding paragraph, have been a decisive factor in the negative perception of Roma.

The interviews that I have reported above have been gathered after the encampment had been established for seven years. At that time (years 1999-2000), national and local newspapers were publishing daily articles<sup>41</sup> on the Casilino 700 *favelas*, the largest Roma township in Europe.

Generalised prejudice toward Roma is expressed by social actors in all these excerpts, and to a superficial observer some of the statements expressed, could easily be taken for racist positions and statements, but in my opinion, there are also elements that conflicts with this interpretation.

The term “Racism”, refers to a well defined theoretical system that postulates the superiority of one race or one human group compared to another, basing this assumption on supposedly “scientific” evidences such as physical, cultural or economic characteristics. The Oxford Dictionary defines Racism as: ‘the theory that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, qualities etc., specific to that race, especially distinguishing it as inferior or superior to another race or races’.

Interviews which have been quoted here are certainly showing a difficulty in dealing with the Roma issue, but the central point of these discourses is based on the fear that Roma encampments will only be another factor of degradation for city areas already degraded and deprived of any institutional care.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview recorded February 1999.

<sup>41</sup> At the end of the Bibliography section there is a list of the articles published on the Casilino 700 encampment in the years prior to its destruction.



None of the interviewed referred to typical racist terms such as “blood”, “race”, or other substitutive terms used in the same essentialistic way (for example some use of the world “culture”).

All have been complaining mostly about two issues: the first is the one related to Roma’s way of life and attitudes toward work and cleanliness, and the second, about their deviance. These points of view have been built on their daily experience, a barman victim of small theft, and a car repairer that due to his job is often subjected to be contacted by small scale criminals that are trying to sell to local car repairers parts of stolen vehicles<sup>42</sup>.

It is difficult for me to explain clearly to non Italians, the total lack of cares and intervention, and the dimension of the degradation in which the city peripheries have been abandoned. As it often happens, Roma are considered responsible for the degradation of the encampments when this is only the product of decades of institutional neglect.

Though, to label these critical issues with the word racism will be a gross oversimplification, and it does not help us in the understanding of the problem.

The interviewed all have a low degree of education, and all, more or less express both prejudice and despise and distrust, but they also add phrases that no racist will ever pronounce, and this in spite of the facts quoted above.

All are saying that ‘there is good and bad in everyone’, two have even added that they have had previous experiences of work with foreigners either personally, like the case of Antonio that works with an Asian employee, or by second-hand contact, like Aldo with his friend that employs a Maghrebi apprentice.

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<sup>42</sup> Car junkyards of the Centocelle-Palmiro Togliatti area have historically been part of the deviant landscape of the eastern periphery of Rome.

In the last interview reported, the two youngsters answered in this way to my direct question: ‘What do you think about foreigners?’, and the answer had been: *‘Sincerely I have never had any direct contact with them, but I can think that they leave their countries trying to seek something better. Anyway I think that we must give them the opportunity to do something’*.

The anti Roma attitude in my opinion, is not something that has originated from a racist behaviour applied toward Roma as a distinct ethnic group, and its roots should be searched instead in the complete lack of any systematic institutional plan to cope with ongoing social emergencies.

Citizens are worried because Roma’s life conditions and economic activities are affecting directly the quality of their lives. The experience they have, is based on the observation of a situation that has basically remained unchanged since the establishment of the early 1960’s Roma’s shanty towns.

The fumes produced by Roma when burning electrical wires in order to separate the rubber from the inside copper metal, arrive directly at the windows of the large building complex of the “Casilino 23”. Roma women who search the neighbourhoods dustbins placed under the apartments of the same “Casilino 23”, leave after the search all the things scattered on the floor all around that have been extracted from the dustbins. These two activities have sparked numerous protests against the Roma presence in the area. Besides, over all this in the background, there is also the worry for the health and sanitary situation of 1.200 persons left for eight years without water, garbage collection and electricity.

The following chapters will add more pieces to this Italian jigsaw puzzle, and will also provide a detailed account on the identity and on the social background, on the migratory projects and personal histories of the encampments inhabitants.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PEOPLE

#### 6.1 From Oran to Centocelle

During the years 1991 and 1992, I was doing fieldwork research in another shanty town that was also placed in the VIIth District, but in the neighbourhood of Quarticciolo<sup>1</sup>. This shanty town had been inhabited by Italian immigrants until the early 80's and later repopulated by nearly one thousand immigrants from Morocco. The village was named Douar Bailill,<sup>2</sup> (the village of Bailill, from the name of the first immigrant who arrived there).

The presences at the Douar were almost exclusively male, though there were also twelve family groups and seven single-parent families (four led by mothers and three by fathers), all of them with children.

In July 1992 this village was burned down in a fire (the cause of which is still undetermined) and the occupants were forced to move to other places.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the administrative division in neighbourhoods of the VIIth District see note 1 in Chapter Five.

<sup>2</sup> This settlement has been the object of a two year research directed by Prof. Roberto De Angelis with my collaboration. The research produced the documentary: "Douar Bailill", presented at the Festival of Documentary Anthropological Films (MAV, Museo Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, 1992, Roma).

*Picture 6.1: The former Douar Bailill encampment as seen from the helicopter. Rome, July 1991.*



Source: Courtesy of Stefano Montesi.

*Picture 6.2: The day that the fire destroyed the Douar. Rome, July 1992.*



Source: Photo by Stefano Malacrita.

After the destruction the population split up taking different paths. Some of the families were temporarily sheltered into hostels provided by the Municipality, others went to Ostia, a small town on the seaside situated at 20 km. from Rome, where a group of buildings had been squatted by young militants belonging to the Roman leftist movement of Social Centres.

The three squatted buildings were very large and offered shelter to many migrants, including some of the families that after the end of their appointed time<sup>3</sup> into the Municipality's Hostels were still in search of a suitable accommodation.

*Picture 6.3: One of the three squatted buildings in Ostia where familiar groups and other former Bidonville inhabitants found shelter. Ostia, 1994.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

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<sup>3</sup> The residence in Municipality's hostels can last up to three months (except in special cases).

The largest group, the one composed of single men, was dispersed into the many Roman's suburbs.

After a few days of research, we discovered that the survivors from the former Douar had found hospitality in one of the largest informal encampment that ever existed in Rome: the Casilino 700 one, where there already were established groups of Roma from Bosnia and Montenegro.

In this place the Moroccan presence has undergone alternate phases going from a period of relative overcrowding (more or less 250 people) to the 163 recorded by the Ministry of Interior's data<sup>4</sup>. This data was gathered after the disruption of Casilino 700 in another encampment, called Casilino 900 (De Angelis, 2005) and situated very close to the former one<sup>5</sup>.

## **6.2 The Moroccan atoll**

The Moroccans built their residences in the middle of the Roma encampment, in small huts and camping vans which surrounded the central building: the Hassan's bar.

Huts built by Moroccans at the Casilino 700 encampment differed very much from the Roma ones both in sizes and shapes. Romani families are very numerous and they need to build larger homes to satisfy their family needs, while single Moroccans both at the Douar and in Casilino 700, would normally build a square simple hut covered with metal foils and wood chunks. The roof would also be different, tent shaped for Romani, and flat for Moroccans, reflecting in some way the traditional urbanistic style of their country of origin and the different climate.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs (2000) Casilino 900 Census.

<sup>5</sup> See Picture 5.8.



*Picture 6.4: Rashid's hut. Casilino 700, June 2000.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

The young migrants who arrived at the new bidonville at the end of the 1990's were all newcomers without any permit of stay and therefore often destined to a state of invisibility due to their semi-illegal presence and, in case of expulsion orders, clandestinity. Their portraits and histories, gathered through participant observation, interviews and video-interviews, depicts in a smaller scale what has been said here in the paragraph before about the typology of Moroccan migrations to Italy through data collected on a larger scale.

The migration, though undertook alone, relies often on large networks inherited through familism and composed of those who migrated the generation before and by the ones who are already "abroad".

Often at their arrival, they would already have a very good knowledge of places and resources, a map of the city's informal places of meeting of their networks. These



resources included any possible shelter, from cheap pensions, to bidonvilles, to squatted and abandoned places. Here the newly arrived migrant could gather intelligence as to where can be found occasions to practise their small ambulant trades or other activities. The places are known, first of all piazza Vittorio and Porta Portese 1 and 2, both very important markets in the Capital. During the summer season, the trade will move to Rome's most important beaches from Ostia and Fregene and all along the "Lungomare"<sup>6</sup>.

Termini Station has been historically a place of meeting for immigrants of every nation. Its vicinity to Piazza Vittorio<sup>7</sup> and the presence of cheap hotels and pensions coupled with the fact that it is an easy location to reach from any suburbs, made it an ideal place for meetings.

The many informal dwellings and dormitories of the Roman suburbs have seen many of these young travellers. For example Amid, one of the young Moroccans of Casilino 700, whose interview is partly reported below, depicts a very common situation. It shows also how the migratory trail follows a path already traced by relatives or friends:

'... mother payed for my ticket. A plane ticket, and I have arrived here..., then I took the Blue Bus Line<sup>8</sup> and it took me to Stazione Termini. When I was there I have found the ones selling lighters, cigarettes... many people: Negroes, Chinese, Algerians, Tunisians Moroccans and Gypsies. And these people told me which bus should I take, it is like a little train, and this took me to Largo Preneste. I wanted to go to the place called "the Gate", I had a paper with the address written over, so I took bus number 516 and I stopped. I am walking and feeling scared, because I have a portfolio with money and my passport, and a little pen which I put into my pocket, I do not want them to be stolen. I am walking and I say to myself: "Where am I going?", so I asked the man at another bus station, and he reads the name of that road and gives me directions.

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<sup>6</sup> See par. 4.4.1

<sup>7</sup> Piazza Vittorio is a square in Rome where are concentrated many immigrant's restaurants, shops and other activities.

<sup>8</sup> The Blue Bus Line (CO.TRA.L.) is the regional bus transport system for Lazio.

When I am there I see a car and there is a man sleeping with his girlfriend in it, I knocked at the window and said: 'Monsieur, vous parlez français?' and he answered: 'No, I do not understand'. So I said the name of the road: 'Ou est la Rue Augusto...' so he took me to this road and said: 'This is the road, you must search number 22'. So I arrived at number 22 and I see that it is not a Cafè Bar, it is a house<sup>9</sup>. Then I turned on the right entering the courtyard and I have found many other Moroccans sitting there, so I started talking to them when suddenly my twin brother arrived calling my name aloud. My brother is now back in Morocco, but he was here long before me. And this is the way in which I later have found the Bidonville'.<sup>10</sup>

In the same Casilino 700 I have also met a small group of four young people that were all coming from a certain road in Casablanca, Rue des Anglais. One of these young men, drew for me a small map of this location on my fieldwork notebook. Another evidence of the importance of friendly and parental networks in the migratory trail. They all came together one after the other, and helped each other as if they were brothers, though this did not protect them against the classical situation of exploitation already experienced by others, as emerges clearly in this interview with one of them, Abdel:

**Monica:** So how did you succeeded in finding a job?

**Abdel:** I have been in Naples for two years: working as a porter. Load, download fruits. I would work with everything: fruits, fish, where there is a job, there I go, but it is tiring. A lot, and for only 20 - 30 euro a day. I start early in the morning. This is a night time job, nearly night, at three, at four o'clock in the morning, when it is not dawn yet. You get the things at the market and put them on the lorry, then you stop to eat something and then you continue: working and working. Porter work is a heavy job.

**Monica:** Have you ever tried to find a job with your Hotel Management diploma?

**Abdel:** I have tried! Of course! I have tried to make this when I arrived in Naples because it is a big city, there is the Port and lots of people, and also a lot of Hotels but I never could find anything, so I started to work as a porter. Then I got fed up with the job and I came here. I have no permit of stay! Nothing! Understand? Only the

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<sup>9</sup> The Cafè Bar that Amid talks about, is the so called "Giorgio's Bar", was situated at middle distance between the old Douar and the Atoll in Casilino 700. It is a place of meeting also because is was very close to "the Gate", another informal dormitory which offered a shelter with a bed for 50 euro per month.

<sup>10</sup> Amid's interview.

Passport, and you cannot work properly without documents! A big mess!..

**Monica:** So you worked in Naples, then you resigned and came here in Rome, but how did you come to find this place? (referred to Casilino 700).

**Abdel:** I arrived at Stazione Termini and there I found some Tunisians and Moroccans, and I have asked them where could I find a cheap place to sleep and eat, and one of them told me that there was a place where all the Moroccans were sleeping, and I asked him to take me there. And after a while we arrived at a place, a building, with many Moroccans sleeping there, living there, and it is cheap, only 50 euro per month. But there was no place, it was already full.

**Hassan:** He has been at first at "The Gate"..

**Abdel:** Yes, "The Gate", but there was no room, so I met someone there, also from Khouribga and which lives close to my house and he asked me if I want to go in a Camper close to the gypsy, where you pay nothing to sleep. So I followed him and came here, I took the caravan and stayed.

**Monica:** How it is to live here?

**Abdel:** Bad. Dirty. Too dirty. But with God's will I will leave this place. I never stay here hanging around. Never. Only in the morning I come here to take my tea or something and then I take the little train for the centre and then I walk up to Piazza Vittorio, to do my trade. I sell shirts, socks, everything, all the things for dressing.

**Monica:** You practice ambulant trade there?

**Abdel:** I have a place there. I work with a family from Naples that are ambulants.. the one with the big tents you know? And then there is the table with everything on: for ladies, men, children... So I work doing this small commerce at the Market.

**Monica:** How much do they pay you?

**Abdel:** Two, three hundred. When there is the Fair even four hundred. Also all the things I need for dressing myself I take them at the Tent. Sometimes I also carry things here to sell to the others. Somebody asks for a dress for himself or for a friend, to send back to Morocco as a present.

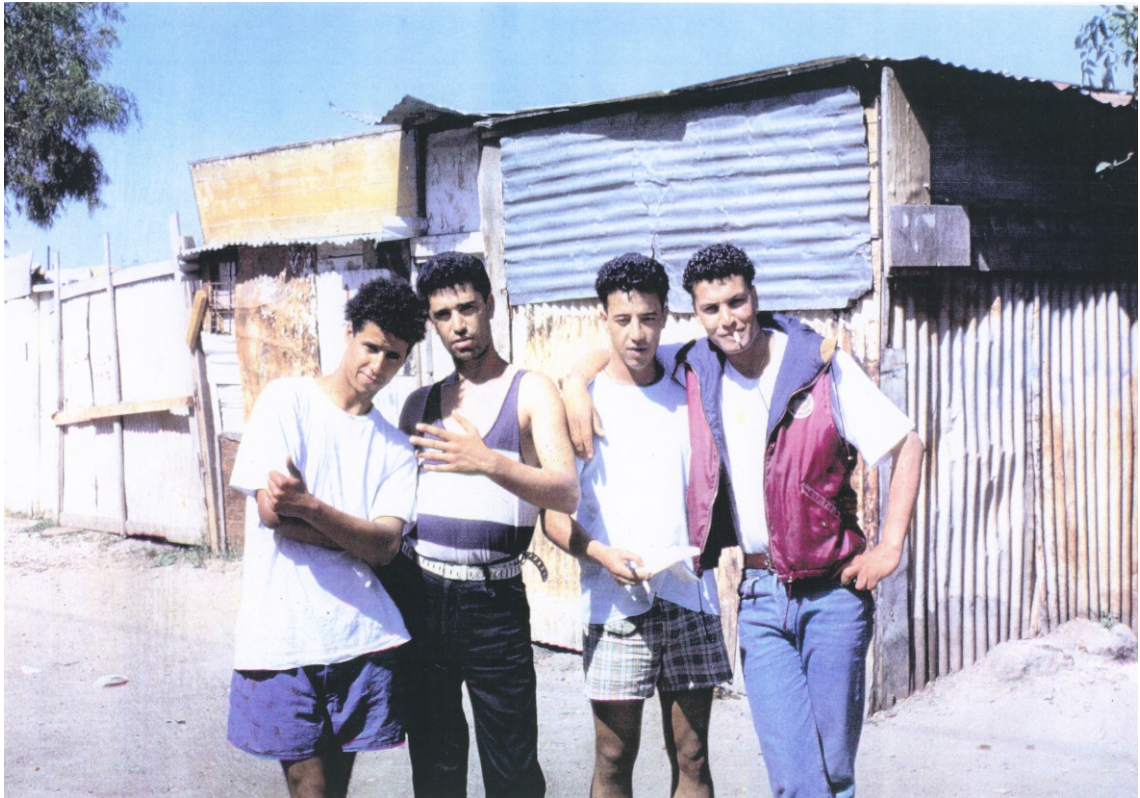
**Monica:** It is not really a rich wage, for how many hours you work everyday? More or less?

**Abdel:** You start at five in the morning, six and you finish at three, sometimes at four, and in the afternoon you rearrange all the things displayed in the morning...

**Monica:** And when you have finished working, what do you do generally?

**Abdel:** Look, it is like now. I finish my job and I take some tea, a coffee with a friend or two... speaking... or I go around, always around to see things...

*Picture 6.5: The group from Rue des Anglais. Douar Bailill, Rome, July 1992.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

The travel is generally a lonely experience, but there are also many cases in which male sons follow their fathers in the migration while sisters generally remain at home with the rest of the family.

This is the case of the Bailill brothers, already mentioned, whose surname christened the former Douar Bailill in Quarticciolo. Their migration story will be tragically marked by the death of the youngest brother, who became a heroine addict, and the oldest brother imprisonment in Milan's jail San Vittore, under charges like drug dealing and handling stolen goods.

The fact that some unaccompanied kids arrive here alone, without their parents or other relative's support, often helps the process of marginalisation and the decline into criminal activities.

To work here in Italy means to be very often without any guarantees: minimum wages and maximum exploitation. Young Rashid tells here below his experience with the gathering of second hand dresses, newspapers and cardboard boxes for a porter's cooperative:

‘... There is no job here. For sixty days I have worked gathering dresses, cardboards and newspapers. With a lorry I had to transport this stuff from places in Rome to the warehouse. But only 20 euro a day. It is in via Prenestina, without documents, without anything you work for 20 euro a day. It is too little money... Very tiring, hard work... Eat at noon: 10 euro, eat for dinner: other 10 euro. Where to sleep after? ...’<sup>11</sup>.

To get a regular job is a difficult task both for Italian and foreigners, but the latter are of course in a much weaker position, both because of the aforementioned Italian's prevalence of informal jobs and of the various requisites requested in order to be regularised<sup>12</sup>.

It is the employer himself that has to go to the Police Station with his employee to declare and register the work relationship; after this is all done, it is needed a declaration of the landlord owner of the house where the migrant is living. These requisites often impossible to satisfy because of the difficulties of getting a rented house for an immigrant, due to the strong prejudices and also by the general difficulty in getting rented apartments in a city like Rome<sup>13</sup>.

As Abdrahim points out:

‘... I went to the Douar Bailill and bought there a hut for 350 Euro. The important thing is that at night you can have a roof over your head where to sleep after you have worked. ...’<sup>14</sup>.

And Abdul, as translated by Salah:

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<sup>11</sup> See Rashid's interview.

<sup>12</sup> See the Italian Police website and leaflet for the norms concerning the stay in Italy. Polizia di Stato: [http://poliziadistato.it/pds/file/files/0554\\_initaliainregola\\_English.pdf](http://poliziadistato.it/pds/file/files/0554_initaliainregola_English.pdf) [Accessed January 2009].

<sup>13</sup> See par. 4.4.1

<sup>14</sup> See Abdrahim interview.

‘... He thought Italy was like other European countries. He looked for a house to rent, but would find not one affordable, and he finished his story into the Douar ...’.<sup>15</sup>

As it often happens it is much easier for the employer to get rid of his employee than to regularise his working position.

Another important point is that the payment of compulsory contributions, a duty for every Italian employee which is very often undispatched, or paid by the workers themselves<sup>16</sup>. During my fieldwork I recorded several episodes of open fraud toward these undocumented migrants. The history of Abdul, can be considered as a typical example of the employees - employer relations in Italy:

‘... He [*the interview has been translated by Salah*] was working for a builder in Perugia. But in the end the boss never payed him. He worked for him for 7 months and he has had only 250 Euro of the 2500 he was entitled to. And he is tired of travelling back and forth to Città di Castello, so in the end he renounced to the money ...’.<sup>17</sup>

In this situation of marginality and institutional invisibility, deviance often becomes an obligatory path that accompanies the daily lives of the Maghrebi that were living in the shanty town of Casilino 700.

They were not even reached by the very few commodities provided for the inhabitants of the encampment by the Municipality. No chemical toilets, no water supply with the water tank, no waste gathering. The only service given was that generously offered by Police and Carabinieri.

These, the words from Abdul on this issue:

‘... in France I had a house, I had everything: shower, occupation, everything! I did not sleep in the streets or in huts. There are no huts

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<sup>15</sup> See Abdulkarim, Salah, Angelo and Mubarak interviews.

<sup>16</sup> From data gathered by the National Work Inspectors it emerges that 40% of migrant workers are in a condition of contributive irregularity and that between 1/4th and 1/5th of the migrant workers in the inspected firms were devoid of a permit of stay. (Dossier FILLEA – CGIL, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> See Abdulkarim, Salah, Angelo and Mubarak interviews.

in France. Not like here with the Gypsies. Everybody has a house in France, where are the bidonville in France? ...’<sup>18</sup>

Episodes of abuse of power are frequent, as Rashid and Amid bitterly describe:

**Rashid:** ... Here with no water, no documents... Police... me I am always scared. I go around in town and Police says: “You, stop there!”, and search, search [*mimes a police search*]. Only the Moroccan is stopped, the gipsy is left in peace. Police are always stealing money, and looks only for the Moroccan. Finds the money and keep it for themselves: and why not?.

**Amid:** Ah yes, generally when they find someone with a lot of money in his pocket, let’s say... 200, 300 euro, he takes it away without saying anything. He just asks: ‘What is your job?’ and you would answer: “Ah you know, this money has come from the sales of smuggled cigarettes...” or you would say: “A friend of mine lent them to me...”. Then they take the money from you and they leave you no receipt, nothing, and send you away. And you can consider yourself lucky if they do not find on you a dose of Heroin, because in this case....

**Rashid:** Well, this has happened to me in Napoli: a person steals something close to me, I stand up and start to go away. At eleven in the night five Policemen came to me at the station and... [*here follows a short talk with Amid to find the correct Italian word*] bludgeoned me, while I was handcuffed, they kicked me with the bludgeon. Then we went to the Police Station, and they bum bum bum... Five people into the toilets. I have been beaten until I was bleeding. Too much.

**Amid:** They beated him black and blue... he was all blue..

**Rashid:** Five Policemen did that to me. In Naples, Station. I did nothing, they only said: “Arab! Moroccan! Come here!” “I did not steal! Where are the evidences that I am a thief?!” “Come here!!!”. For fifteen days after, I had only slept. I swear. No hospital, I went to a friend’s house. After March passes, I will go away, had enough. I go back to Morocco<sup>19</sup>.

Episodes like this are reported as being part of everyday’s life, and because both the Douar and Casilino 700 were considered to be places for heroine dealers and drug addicts, the controls were more frequent and tough. The story is reported because it is exemplary of a condition that many immigrants have to face, especially when they have to deal with Police authorities.

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<sup>18</sup> See Abdulkarim, Salah, Angelo and Mubarak interviews.

<sup>19</sup> Video interview recorded by me at Casilino 700 and partially transcribed. An account on the usage of video equipment during this research is described here in par. 3.5.3.

In the late winter of 1996, during a Police operation in Casilino 700, M. from Khouribga was shot in the arm for he ran away at the police's intimation to stop. For the whole night the huts and small caravans of the Moroccan Atoll were thoroughly searched. As a memento, on Hassan's Bar was left the evident sign of a bullet that pierced the wood of the walls, shot clearly at a man's height.

The claim of being robbed of money by police officers during occasional searches at both encampments have been numerous. The same Hassan, said he had been robbed of 1.000 euro. Although he reported the facts to the Centocelle's Police Office, until the year 2000 (last time I saw him) no intelligence was delivered to him as to whether the episode had been investigated or not.

But relations with the Moroccan embassy are often problematic. Two young migrants, Monir and Khayat, had had their passports burned in the Douar Bailill fire. When they went to the Moroccan embassy to report the passport lost, they were told that it was a lie that the passports were destroyed, and that they had both probably sold them instead<sup>20</sup>.

A different destiny instead, has been that reserved to the young Moussa.

Moussa arrived in Rome when he was only twelve together with his father, a carpet ambulant trader, and they lived together in the Douar. One year after we<sup>21</sup> met him, he asked us if it was possible for him to go to school and get his qualifications here in Italy. Thanks to the commitment of Prof. De Angelis and of the freelance photographer Stefano Montesi, it was possible to ask for help from the Municipality of Rome. Through the Municipality's Social Services, he succeeded in being registered as a full time student at the "*Città dei Ragazzi*" in Civitavecchia, a juvenile college for

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<sup>20</sup> See Salah, Lhoussein, Aziz, Amin, Bailill and Monir interviews.

<sup>21</sup> Prof. De Angelis, Photographer Stefano Montesi and me.



unaccompanied minors not far from Rome. He has grown now, and has ended school after passing all the exams and obtaining his qualifications.

The Moroccan Atoll in Casilino 700 had also its entrepreneurs. In the middle of the Roma encampment, and surrounded by the small Moroccan huts there was the Hassan's Bar. Hassan already had another smaller Bar in the former Douar that had been destroyed by the fire. When the community moved to Casilino 700 to rebuild their huts, he also joined them, building the largest two story hut I have ever seen. Both the bar, and the space in front of it, were the public and open space of nearly all the events that happened in the Moroccan area. Being a natural place for meeting, it became for me a privileged place of observation for the registration of the relations and activities of everyday's life.

*Picture 6.6: Hassan's Restaurant Bar. At the second floor are Hassan's bedroom and living room.*



Photo by the Author. Rome 2000.

Although in possession of a regular permit of stay, Hassan preferred to live and work in the Casilino bidonville, occasionally alternating the barman occupation with his real one (he was a blacksmith).

Since Hassan built the Bar for the first time in 1993 it has been burnt down three times, and each time rebuilt with the silent and indispensable help of Hnia, his companion, whose story I report here.

In 1990 she met Hassan in Rome. She was a widow and he was divorced, so they decided to live together and to build a Bar in the former Douar. After the eviction, and the transfer to Casilino 700 they built a new Bar. Bigger this time, and with two floors: the Bar - Restaurant below, and Hassan and Hnia's home upstairs. For Hnia it has been very hard. While in the former settlement there were also other women, both alone and with their family, in the new place in Casilino 700. Hnia was the only woman living in the Moroccan encampment.

Hassan's place in Casilino, was more a Restaurant than the simple little kiosk they had formerly. This was due to the culinary abilities of Hnia, who relentlessly prepared bread, *tajine*, *cous - cous* and many other Moroccan specialties. This activity, in spite of its up and downs due to the conditions, went on for nearly three years, until one day I stopped for a glass of mint flavoured tea and I saw Hassan, dark in the face, the whole Bar in disarray, and Hnia nowhere to be found.

After some embarrassment on my part, I asked Hassan where Hnia was, he told me to follow him upstairs to talk. When in the room he showed me the pictures of his life with Hnia: some parties with sons and daughters, a document photo, all teared and rearranged with adhesive tape. Hnia had gone: eloped with an Italian, some Policeman from the Foreign Office. Hassan had been looking for her for three days when finally an

indication came. Another immigrant saw her in a small sea village in the vicinity of Rome, Santa Marinella. He went looking for her in order to talk, and to tell her how he despised her behaviour towards him, but after that, he has not seen her again.

I also lost her trace until one day, when some years later I met a friend of hers, Naima, and she told another version of events. Naima said that Hnia was tired and wanted Hassan to marry her properly so to obtain a permit of stay through the family reunion. For all these years she had been in Italy without any document but her passport. The marriage, with the consequent permit of stay for familiar reunion, would have allowed her to leave Italy to have the chance to go back and forth to Morocco to visit her five daughters, whom she had not seen for all the years while she was engaged with Hassan. Then suddenly this man, the Policeman, arrived one day at the encampment, maybe Hassan was not there, and Hnia revealed to him her situation, we will never know the details, but after the narration, in the end Naima took decidedly the side of Hnia.

She said that Hassan had waited too long because it was too good for him to have a free help in the kitchen and company in bed without having any responsibility nor taking any commitment, not to mention the wage aspect, (the work she did in the Bar has never been paid, as in many other family business), and Hnia took in the end her revenge.

After her disappearance the Bar met a slow decline and more than once I found it closed for lunch and opened only for dinner. Hassan was originally a blacksmith, and I think that Hnia was the one who kept opening the place at lunchtime while Hassan was engaged in some smithy temporary work with some of his Italian contacts, but after she was gone, a long period of time passed between Hassan was being able to find a replacement.

During the last year of life of the Casilino's encampment, in 2000, I came back to visit Hassan. It was two days before the celebration for the Eid al Fitr, and I found him in the company of two young sisters: Habiba and Amina. Habiba, the younger of the two, was a temporary guest, waiting to go to Milan to meet part of her family, while Amina took Hnia's place both in the bar and in Hassan's heart. In this way the Bar returned to its formal splendour and lavish cooking. Hassan was very happy, business was far better now with the magic hands of the new *cuisiniere*.

The work in the kitchen was incessant. For the Eid's night, the sisters had been preparing more than 200 pancakes and ring-shaped cakes, huge quantities of mint flavoured tea, sweet doughnuts with caramel sugar and sesame seeds, waiting to be eaten later.

Even in a rather disarrayed way, Muslim festivities were respected in both the Douar<sup>22</sup> and in Casilino 700, the Eid al Kbir has been celebrated every year, to know the exact date Hassan phoned the "Big Mosque", (i.e. the Central Mosque of Rome, situated in the park of Forte Antenne). There is also another small Mosque in Centocelle, the "Al Huda", far more closer than the big one to the encampment, but Hassan 'does not know much about it', and for Friday's prayer, he prefers to go to the big one.

Toward the end of the year 1999, the Moroccan section of the encampment had a new "rebirth" after the sudden depopulation of the winter before, when daily Police controls at the Roma's expense had discouraged the Maghrebi guests to rely further on Casilino 700 as a shelter, though temporary and informal.

The new year replaced a great part of the former inhabitants, the majority of which have come to Rome just as temporary sojourners with the view to find better situations in the

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<sup>22</sup> See note 2 in this Chapter.

northern regions of Italy. Of all the young men of the past years none has stayed, and for some of them the migratory trail is passing through hard times of painful suspension in the jails of Regina Coeli and Sollicciano.<sup>23</sup>

Only two of the former group of six from Rue Des Anglais met a better fate: Nurdin and his brother opened a barber shop in Milan (Nurdin was a barber also in Casablanca); Chakeb and Monir, died.

Of the first inhabitants of the old Douar only Moussa's father remained and, of course, Hassan with his factotum Moustafa.

One of the last interviews before the eviction and the destruction of Casilino 700 was with an Abdel full of hope:

**Abdel:** Look, in Morocco you feel alright. The air is good, there is food, but it is bad as there is no job there... I mean there is, but for very low wages, less than in Italy. Even if you are educated, there is no job, what to do then? You go to Europe and work in a richer country, where there are more commercial activities. You buy, sell, even if you buy things and then take them back to Morocco, you take these dresses, for men and women. But in Morocco it is expensive, so it is better that you buy it here in Italy at the Market, and then send to Morocco or give it to somebody who is going back there.

**Monica:** But your future, your life, do you imagine it here or in Morocco?

**Abdel:** Here, in Morocco, all is good for me. With God's will, with a little help you can carry a normal life, and you do not do this kind of life forever, just for a while and then you change. Where you feel good, it is there that you should build your home. Italy is good for me. Maybe Rome is better than Naples. In Naples there are too many Moroccans already doing the commerce with dresses or cigarettes at the markets. There are many jobs in Italy, more than in Morocco. Since when I arrived here in Italy I have had not even one day without working. If you are good, honest, you do your job, nobody tells you anything, if you do all things properly. Do not make riots, do not drink, or smoke, like this is better. The only problem is with the house... with light, electricity, water... This is the problem.

**Monica:** Are you married?

**Abdel:** No, not yet.

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<sup>23</sup> Regina Coeli is the oldest prison of Rome, situated in Trastevere, while Sollicciano is another prison close to Florence, is said to be very tough, described as overcrowded and unlivable and where there have occurred several episodes of suicide among the inmates.

**Monica:** Who's left in Khouribga of your family?

**Abdel:** Father died, then there are two brothers already married and a sister, married as well and then the youngest sister, she goes to school and is pretty good at it.

**Monica:** She is the one that lives with your mother?

**Abdel:** Yes but there are also her brothers and sisters who are living very close to my mother's place and they always help her, because she is alone now, so if she is in need of something she can always ask the family. A women alone can face also bad situations, but there are also aunties, and I am content. I hope that things will soon be sorted out, with God's will<sup>24</sup>.

After the eviction from the Casilino 700 encampment I lost contacts with the members of the small Moroccan community, but I have occasionally met some of them at the market that takes place every Friday at the "Big Mosque" of Forte Antenne or either at the Piazza Vittorio and Porta Portese markets<sup>25</sup>, where they continue their small trades. More recent news about them have arrived to me from one of my colleagues who were specifically working with this community. All of the families that were living in the former Douar Bailill encampment and later on in Ostia have succeeded in finding a house at an affordable price, and have then obtained regularisation through amnesties and family reunion. For what concerns instead the younger ones and the single men, many of them are still struggling to find a suitable work and accomodation, and their lives are still struggling for a way of living under the very difficult circumstances described until now. The road to integration, for the dreamers of a successful life, is still long.

### **6.3 The last Yugoslavs: the Roma of Casilina 700.**

With the previous paragraph we have given a general look at the conditions in which even today, Romani communities are living all over Europe. In particular the Italian

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<sup>24</sup> See Abdel's interview.

<sup>25</sup> Famous markets in Rome where both immigrants and Roma practices their small trades.

situation has been documented and described as traumatic from sources such as the Council of Europe, that in 2006 stated that: '[in Italy] The lack of tangible progress in the integration of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers, the widespread discrimination they often face and the poor living conditions prevailing in many camps is a source of concern.' (Council of Europe, 2006a).

In this section I will add another piece to the Casilino 700 mosaic. Here following are the data collected during a quantitative research conducted by CENSIS<sup>26</sup> on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2000. For this research, whose goal was to study the Bosnian propensity to re enter their homeland, I have collected the data concerning Roma. The encampment has changed very much during the eight years of its life. In the beginning, in 1992, there were only a few Roma families, but after December of the same year, the numbers increased.

The data presented here concerns a sample of the sole Bosnian group, the ones that together with the Moroccans have been the centre of my field research.

### **6.3.1 Area of origin**

In the August of 2000 I distributed a questionnaire to a sample of 100 Bosnian Roma (54 men and 46 women); with the aim of assessing the propensity to return to their country of origin (CENSIS, 2000).

The research has been conducted in the largest Italian cities (Rome, Milan, Naples, Florence, Turin), and in the sample that the CENSIS Institute built, there was also a part dedicated to Bosnian Roma. The research took place in the Casilino 700 encampment

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<sup>26</sup> CENSIS (Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali), an important Italian private Research institute.

because in this place it was known that there was a large Xoraxanè community of Romani Bosnian refugees.

For this reason, when I began the survey, I have avoided interviewing the other Romani groups that were also residing in the same encampment (i.e. Romanian Roma, Montenegrinians, Macedonians). The sample on which the research was conducted (100 persons), was drawn from CENSIS after the analysis of the first official encampment census conducted by VIIth Group NAE in 1994. Besides, I was already working in that place doing my fieldwork since eight years and I was well aware of the ethnic composition of the encampment.

The age classes were so divided: 0-29 years (43%), 30-39 (27%), 40-49 (14%), 50-59 (6%), 60-69 (6%), over 60 (4%). The Roma population is very young and because of the worrying life conditions their life expectancy is among the lowest in the whole Europe (Caritas, 1998). All came from Bosnia Herzegovina, and all were belonging to the Xoraxanè group (*Xoraxai*, Muslim).

Places of origin were: Sarajevo (44%), Foca (13%), Gorazde (11%), Ilidza (9%), Bihac (8%), Mostar (5%), Bilec, Gazco e Tuzla (2%), and Banja Luka, Hagodovi, Konjic e Tasovcic (1%). These are all locations that became sadly famous during the war. These names clearly demonstrates that this Roma population belong all to the Refugee category, a fact evidently not so obvious for the Italian authorities, as we will see further on.



Families are extended groups composed by the male head of the family and his relatives (wife and children). Sons tend to observe patrilinear residential rules, while daughters, after marrying, tend to go living with their husband's family<sup>27</sup>.

Literacy level in the group are generally very low, to this we must add the general life conditions which are very much below the citizenship levels of any other minority group in Europe (Council of Europe, 2006b).

Although during the last two decades we have witnessed the growth in number of prominent Roma figures such as politicians<sup>28</sup> and intellectuals, Roma representation in institutions and other public spaces is still very minoritarian, especially in Italy<sup>29</sup>.

Among the Bosnian group described here, illiteracy rates are very high. Those interviewed stated that they were able to read and write (56% yes, 44% no). Among the 56% that answered "yes", 46% said that they had attended "some kind of school" and more specifically, Primary Schools (93%). Of the ones who declared to have attended school, 22% were in possession of a Primary School Certification, while another 71% never finished studying. Lastly, among the 2% who said that they had attended higher level of education, 4% had obtained a Diploma from a Technical School.

### **6.3.2 Housing conditions**

Informal encampments have for decades been the only possibility offered to foreign and even to some Italian Roma. After the year 2000 the Municipality Council attempted to solve this problem through the officialization and consequent rationalisation of some of

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<sup>27</sup> This must not be considered a general law but a trend: familiar group's cohesion is one of the conditions that Roma tries to satisfy paramount (although conflicts can arise also between members of the same family unit). In these cases the extended family represents a guarantee and a protection.

<sup>28</sup> Livia Jároka, Hungarian Sociologist and Anthropologist of Roma origin is one Roma MP elected in the European Parliament.

<sup>29</sup> There are two cases in Italy of Roma elected in local Municipality's councils: the Sinto Yuri Del Bar and the Serbians Dijana Pavlovic and Vojislav Stojanovic.

the encampments and with the destruction of some others, but in spite of these actions, the situation remains worrying and unworthy of a European country. These conditions, known and documented, have provoked a Resolution from the Council of Europe on Italy's behaviour toward this minority (Council of Europe, 2006a, 2006b).

In relation to the housing condition the most common form of housing was the self-built hut (76%), while a 17% lived in caravans temporarily offered by the Municipality of Rome.

In Bosnia, only 6.3 % were living in situations like that of the encampment, while the remaining 93,7 % were living in houses that have been destroyed or occupied during and after the Yugoslavian war of the 1990's.

At the Casilino 700 the accesses to services were distributed in this way: water (26 % yes; 74 % no), electricity and gas (1 % yes; 99 % no), toilets (15 % yes; 85 % no), waste material gathering (13,4 % yes; 86,6 % no).

This means that since their arrival to Italy they had been compelled to re-invent their life as shanty town dwellers, in spite of their conditions of origin.

### **6.3.3 Administrative and legal situation**

For the majority, the main reasons for which they had to leave Bosnia were the war actions occurring in the place where they were living (85 %). The second reason in order of importance has been the fact that their house had been occupied or destroyed (48%) and the threatening actions directed toward them (32 %). Evidently the raging war was the main reason for this diaspora.

A large number of the interviewed (61, 2 % of total survey) have left Yugoslavia in 1991, while the others have arrived during the following two years; respectively 18,4 % in 1992 and 18,4 % in 1993. Very few arrived later, in 1989 and 1990 (2 %).

As we will see in the next section Roma's legal conditions are generally very complicated.

Both places of origin and time of arrival to Italy tells us that they should have been considered as refugees, but the fact of being Roma has had a negative influence on the modality of their welcoming and shelter and on the possibility of being granted minimum citizenship rights.

For example during the war, many City Councils have been destroyed and with them the archives and the personal documents kept there. Besides, many villages that were inside Bosnian borders became after the war Serbian, or Croatian, making for Roma even more difficult to request their identity documents (especially Passports). Furthermore, the Bosnian consulate is in Milan, therefore it was necessary for Roma to undertake expensive travel and to risk, in the process, of being caught without documents<sup>30</sup>, and consequently of being expelled.

At the time of their arrival, the special law on Refugees from former Yugoslavia (L.390/92) should have guaranteed a temporary permit of stay for humanitarian reason to all those who arrived in Italy after 1991.

In relation to this, the dates of the arrival in Italy were, in percentages for each year of arrival: 1991 (49 %), 1992 (24,5 %), 1993 (23,5 %), the rest arrived before 1991.

At their arrival in Italy only 50,5 % succeeded in having a temporary permit of stay for humanitarian reasons, while all the remaining others were without any kind of permit.

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<sup>30</sup> The Yugoslavian Identity Card (*Licna Karta*) has no value in Italy, where the Law requests that even Italian citizens to carry their identity documents always with them.

When the questionnaire was administered (2000) 43,4 % had a temporary permit and 56,6 % not<sup>31</sup>.

This condition of irregularity is indicated by the fact that although present in Italy since 1992, only 37 % of the total was registered to the Register's Office, while 20 % were registered at the employment agency. The percentage rose for health care assistance (69 %). A right which was granted by all the Italian immigration laws from the one of 1990 (L.39/1990) to 2009 (DL 25/07/1998) also to the irregulars and clandestine migrants<sup>32</sup>.

A serious problem is represented by the expulsion orders that are extremely frequent and represents for Roma the biggest obstacle to regularisation, especially under the new regulations which classifies undocumented migration as a criminal offence.

#### **6.3.4 Economic activities**

As we have seen in the first paragraph of this work, informal activities represent a very traditional form of income in the city of Rome and not only for Roma and migrants.

Of the hundred persons, 84.7% have generally declared to have "an occupation". There are sections of the informal labour market that are steadily occupied by the Roman Romani community, and also the newcomers from this last migration have engaged in these activities.

The prominent economic activity practised is that of recycling metals and used batteries (56.7%). This job includes mainly two kinds of marketable goods, that of metal heaps recycling (iron, copper and aluminium, sometimes wood), mostly carried out by men

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<sup>31</sup> See par. 4.5.1 for more informations about the problems arising when Roma have to deal with regularisation, residence and applications to obtain the Italian citizenship.

<sup>32</sup> In 2009, the law was revised by the Berlusconi government under heavy pressure from the North Liga Party who introduced a series of amendments like the one that treats undocumented migration as a penal offence and the one which allows local governments to establish the so called "ronde" (groups formed by private citizens with the aim of patrolling the territory).  
Ministero dell'Interno, (2009) L.15/07/2009 n.94, **Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza pubblica**. [online]. Available from: <http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/09094l.htm> [Accessed September 2009].

and their sons in public discharge and in and around the city, and the “small” recycling of other objects (11.1%). This second activity is mainly considered a woman’s task because is generally practised in the neighbourhood where the encampment is located.

During these “searches” as they are called, small groups of Romani women search the whole area’s dustbins. Everything that can be fixed and resold is examined carefully and gathered: garments, shoes, small furnitures and objects, and everything, if saleable, is picked up to be repaired and sold (De Angelis, 2006)<sup>33</sup>.

In both cycles of recycling the goods and materials are transported to the encampment to be divided into categories and to be fixed and cleaned. On Sundays Roma will load their small lorries and travel to the various open air markets in town to sell the objects gathered in the searches<sup>34</sup>.

Even though those activities represent the only form of a steady income they remain illegal because they are practiced without any authorization.

The law requires the Roma to abide by certain conditions that, in their present situation, they could never succeed in satisfying. Therefore even though the gathering represents a perfectly regulatable activity, it cannot be used to demonstrate the possession of a regular income in order to get a permit of stay for job reasons as the law requests.

Even if recycling constitutes the sole form of income, it is actually practised illegally both by regularised and non-regularised Roma. This happens because the Roma cannot meet the conditions requested in order to apply for a permit of stay for reason of self employment.

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<sup>33</sup> See in this chapter Picture 5.3.

<sup>34</sup> While for groups of recent arrival such as the Bosnian Xoraxanè this activity is still undertook with low prices objects and in peripheral markets other Roma groups have learned to work in the field of Antiquities and Modern Antiquities, acquiring both customers and expertise. This second group is working in more specialised and refined markets such as Old Porta Portese, Flaminio or Tor di Quinto.

For example one of the requests is the one tied to the registration to the Italian Chamber of Commerce (CCIAA). The candidate must pass an exam on Commodity Studies, Italian Laws on commerce and other topics. It is evident that Roma's condition of illiteracy prevents them from obtaining this documentation. But even if this request could be fulfilled, there will always remain the other important condition, requested by the legislator that concern the housing conditions:

‘The worker who does not belong to the European Union must anyway demonstrate to possess an adequate housing condition, and to have an annual income, coming from legal sources, of a sum superior to the minimum level foreseen from the Law from the dispensation to the participation to Health contributions or either must produce a corresponding guarantee from Italian Citizens or Associations or companies regularly sojourning in the State territory’ (Art.24 L.6/3/98 n.40).

There was no possibility of meeting the conditions laid out in Art. 24 of the past Immigration Law<sup>35</sup> concerning the independent occupations, and with the new law<sup>36</sup>, the conditions have become even more difficult to be fulfilled, especially by Roma.

In short, four fundamental conditions must be satisfied: the applicant must earn adequate financial resources for the kind of activity which he/she wants to practise (commercial, industrial, professional etc.), then there is the need to fulfil other conditions requested by the Italian Laws on Commerce Regulation (i.e. subscription to Professional boards or Associations, and possession of a CCIAA certificate), then there is the need for a Declaration, issued by the competent authority, not older than three months that certificates that there are no impediments to the release of the authorization

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<sup>35</sup> L. 06/03/1998 n.40.

<sup>36</sup> L. 30/07/2002 n.189 (later modified by the L. n.25 26/02/2010).

or license for the enterprise and lastly, and most important, the housing conditions and the annual income already mentioned<sup>37</sup>.

For Roma therefore, the only possibility for a “legal” work is that represented by *manghèl*, (begging), formerly considered as a criminal offence, and decriminalized in 1999 (L.205/1999). This new Law abrogated the former Art. 670, that requested the custody in jail for a three months period for the beggar caught in the act of begging.

Presently the law does not punish anymore the act of begging, but it prevents and punishes anyone using a minor under 14 years of age for the purpose of begging.

If caught, the sanction is the custody in jail for a period going from three months to one year. An accessory regulation foresees the suspension of the parental authority, which can give way to a proceeding toward the adoption of the involved minor (Art. 671). On the basis of the present norms the sole act of begging with a child is not considered a crime, unless this provokes any kind of injury to the aforementioned minor.

The *manghèl* is practiced by 27,8 % of the interviewed (the majority of whom were women).

### **6.3.5 Migratory trails and evaluations**

General aspects of Bosnian Roma migration have been already discussed here<sup>38</sup>, however we will analyse the data concerning the preferred choice of emigration country and the reasons for this choice.

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<sup>37</sup> The question concerning the determination of this minimum sum is ambiguous and certainly the legislator did not think to the kind of small trade activities in which Roma and other migrants are engaged. The text of the Law, article 4, state that: ‘Income must not be below the annual amount of the social security allowance and proof must be furnished by attaching a photocopy of the alien’s income tax returns, or in cases where the self-employed activity was started during the course of the year, or where regulations do not provide for mandatory income tax returns, income can be proven using other “objective” documents’. L.30/07/2002 n.189.

<sup>38</sup> See par.6.3.3.

As for many other migrants other relatives who have already migrated elsewhere represent one of the most important knots in their relations network.

For this reason the interviewed stated that the choice of Italy as a destination depended mainly on the fact that relatives or friends were already here<sup>39</sup> (59,2 %) or because it was the nearest country to reach (59,2 %). Another 32,7% instead, considered Italy as a long time friendly country while another 24,5 % stated that they left their country only because they had been forced to do so.

Even though they had never received any kind of help or assistance (95,9 %) and their evaluation of the treatment received has been classified somewhere between null (40,8 %) or absolutely unsatisfactory (38,8 %) Italy remains the place, among other European countries, where they would prefer to settle. I will try to explain this apparently contradictory answer by integrating this data with the data obtained during the many informal conversations I have had with the Roma during my field research.

The strict regulations and controls over Refugees in northern European countries often dissuade Roma from the idea of settling there. Italy, with her widespread shadow economy and with all her cultural similarities to the Balkanic area, constitutes a country far more attractive than the cold and rainy northern European countries.

In spite of the general lack of control, shelter and assistance, there is room for an interstitial existence that leaves the Roma enough room to continue to live using some of their economical niches and without much control from authorities<sup>40</sup>.

60% of the interviewed defined Germany as the nation with the best welcoming towards Roma, but as many head of the families have affirmed: ‘in the end it is always better Italy, because in Germany they give you a house but then they throw you away back to

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<sup>39</sup> All these data were gathered during the CENSIS research already quoted. The trend, also for Roma, is to follow an already known migratory trail, possibly already travelled over by relatives or friends.

<sup>40</sup> On economic informality and black economy as pull factors see also parr. 2.3 and 4.2.



Bosnia'. In the selection of the preferred countries, Italy is placed in second position (13%) followed by Holland (11%) and by other countries such as Belgium and Spain (4%), France (1%).

### **6.3.6 Propensity to resettle**

The ethnic composition of the people interviewed in their place of origin at the beginning of the war was so divided: mixed (68%), Bosnian majority (28%), Serbian and Croatian majority (1 % each), others (2 %). At the end of the war in the same areas the percentages were so allotted: Bosnian (43,9 %), mixed groups (26,5 %), Serbian (21,4 %) and Croatian (4,1 %).

It must be remembered that Roma's condition is very peculiar. They did never really belong to any of the belligerent groups. Even though they are of Muslim religion they were not considered as "true" Bosnian, and the same mechanism was and is at work in Serbia and Croatia. This is one of the serious problems that made it impossible for many to resettle in their area of origin even when these resulted to be occupied by the same groups.

In many cases the houses where Roma were living had been occupied by non Roma Bosnian. The war had abruptly put an end to the multiethnic experiment to which Tito gave life. An overview of the contemporary policies enacted in all the newly formed Yugoslavian state demonstrates that these states were each going toward the formation of ethnically cleansed territories (ERRC, 2004).

The systematic disruption of ways of social protections on the road to liberism, and the erosion of every form of solidarity is strongly felt, as we read in this interview with Sejdo, a Xoraxanè Roma:

**Sejdo:** From Bosnia, I come from Bosnia, I was in Bihac.

**Monica:** Were you living in an encampment?

**Sejdo:** Nooooo what encampment! I had a nice house in my country and I had a beautiful mechanical workshop. Because I am a mechanic. And I have left everything I had there, because of the war. I did not come here for fun, to stay here in the mud. I cannot find anything. I am looking for a job it is now years. Since I arrived in 1992 I applied through the Work Office, but they have never found anything for me.

**Monica:** Yugoslavia! What do you remember about your country?

**Sejdo:** I remember all good things. For example I remember my house, my workshop. I was good to my customer! And then, there was brotherhood in Yugoslavia! Brotherhood is the Communism. I still feel a Communist, because I swore once, and I will be loyal until I die. Because when there was the Communism Yugoslavia was *tranquil*. You could go anywhere, sleep anywhere. But when Communism finished, then the disaster started. Before, nobody could dare to tell you: ‘Go away you are a Gipsy!’ There was the Law! ...”<sup>41</sup>.

The international community has blessed and legitimated the disruption of a broader Yugoslavian federation in favour of the creation of many small and differently ethnic-based states. In this situation, Roma have been reluctant to join this project choosing between one of the belligerent parties. During the initial years of my fieldwork I noticed that the Bosnian Roma I was working with, when asked about their country of origin answered invariably: “Yugoslavia”, Sarajevo. Only upon my insistence they would finally declare their Bosnian origin and only after years from their arrival in Italy, and the continuous contacts with institutions who were asking them their nationalities, Roma would finally answer “Bosnia”. I cannot describe this condition as general, but for what concerns the group I have been studying, they can be described as the last Yugoslavs, the last to admit the crash of the Federation.

The memory of former President Tito is still very much alive. His picture in his official white high uniform, is often preserved and kept together with other important documents such as passports, identity cards and family pictures. In the case of Sholta, one of the Romani women I met during my fieldwork, Tito’s image was held between

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Sejdo, Casilino 700.

two torn Qur'an pages reproducing the Al-Fatiha Sura, and an image of Krishna as a child. In that occasion Mrs. Sholta showed me proudly the picture and, blinking at me while pointing at his picture exclaimed: '*Druže* Tito!' (Comrade Tito!).

Besides, Roma's conditions were worsened by the fact that since the clash of Socialists government in eastern European countries, all the former guarantees of equality between Roma and non Roma failed.

There were for example, enormous difficulties that Roma had to face (and today the situation hasn't changed much) when they were in need of renewing their documents or Passport and therefore to obtain the necessary documentation from their country of origin.

One typical statement given by S., 39 years old, originary from Bihac, that told me that even if the area was in the hand of Bosnians many non Roma Bosnian occupied the Roma homesteads refusing the restitution. Another example is the one of R., 30 years old, from Sarajevo, that would resettle but only if it would have been possible for him and his family to move to Croatia.

In spite of the various problems there is nonetheless a minority that is inclined to resettle, but only if some conditions are fulfilled.

To the question 'Will you ever want to return to Bosnia?' 32% answered yes, and 40% no, while the remaining 28% were undecided (maybe, I do not know).

Those who agreed to go back will go only when there will be enough money (72,2 %), when the situation will get calmer (9,3 %), in a few years (11,1 %), when it would be possible again to rebuild a house (3,7 %) or when the family will decide it<sup>42</sup> (3,7 %).

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<sup>42</sup> Familiar groups are very large, for the 78,7 % of the interviewed they are composed by a number oscillating between the 60 and 70 persons, only 2 % declared to have a familiar group ranging from 2 to 20 people.

85 % thinks to restart the same economic activity that was practising prior to the war, even if many added that they could adapt themselves to every kind of job (27 %). Besides, the possible job to which they aspired there were people who would have liked to work as mechanic or builder (28 %), barman (5 %) or policeman (5 %).

The ones who decided not to return back<sup>43</sup> justified this choice with the fact that Italy suited them well (20,8 %) or because in Bosnia they had nothing anymore, neither home, nor job or relatives (48%). 16,7 % considered Bosnia as an insecure place, while another group based this decision on economic considerations (10,4 %).

One of the questionnaire's questions asked to state what could make them change idea about their return to Bosnia.

Answers were of different kind. If they were offered a sum of money for each family member (78,8 %), if there would be the certainty to have back their homes (60,0 %), if economic help from Europe would be used to recreate working activities (23,5 %), if there were not risks for personal security together with the possibility of living in a peaceful zone (42,4 %).

Conditions under which they would never have accepted to go back were: separation from the familiar group (77,1 %), resettlement in areas others than the one of origin (45,8 %) or the fear of suffering forms of intimidation or threat by the ethnic group majority (24,0 %).

The next question asked in which country, between Italy and Bosnia, they would prefer for their children to live and grow in.

Of the 100 persons interviewed, 8 had not answered the question, 65 choose Italy, and 26 Bosnia. Many of these Bosnian Roma knew Italy from before the war. Among these

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<sup>43</sup> 69,1 % considers this decision as definitive.

interviewed there were many who have travelled for years back and forth carrying from Italy goods to be resold in Bosnia, especially car parts and garments from Naples. Furthermore many had relatives who moved to Italy during the 1960's migration<sup>44</sup>.

The following item was the only open ended question of the whole survey and was asking Roma to explain in their own words the reasons for the aforesaid country choice.

Among the ones who choose Italy, the most frequently given motivations were: 'here in Italy there is a better life' (25 %), or 'my family is used to Italy and my children were born here' (19 %), while 7 % affirmed that 'here in Italy my family is more safe' (16 %) "there is nothing anymore in Bosnia" (6 %), 'a better future here' and 'I am at ease in Italy' (3 %) while 1 % stated that they 'do not know anything about Bosnia'. In these cases, the comparison between Italy and Bosnia and the choice of Italy as their future country of residence were prevalently made by the youngest head of the families, while a consistent number of elders opted for Bosnia, 'because Bosnia is my homeland' (22 %).

The last data, is the one tied to the knowledge of resettlements projects in their homeland: 98 % of the interviewed have never heard anything about any of these projects. These disheartening percentages are an evident indicator of how insignificantly the big international projects of resettlement have had an impact on the dispersed Roma communities. On the other hand, it also sadly shows the quality and the ineffectiveness of the interventions directed toward Roma on behalf of International agencies.

After all it is not surprising, when we consider the fact that '... to date, justice has yet to be provided to Romani victims of actions during the 1992-1995 war' and that 'vast numbers of Roma have been to date unable to claim pre-war property and have

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<sup>44</sup> See par. 4.3.2.

remained without adequate compensation for property confiscated or destroyed during the war' (ERRC, 2004, p. 2).

### **6.3.7 Aspects of integration**

In spite of the dramatic conditions described until now, there are also aspects related to the relations with Italian citizens and Italian institutions that must be considered and highlighted since they constitute a positive indicator of the integration process.

The knowledge of the Italian language is good enough (88,9 %) and only the 11,1 % do not speak Italian at all (this percentage is mostly composed by elders).

Sons and nephews are the ones with the better knowledge of the Italian language (50 %), and of these, 56,5 % have said to be attending school. The same pupils said that they were very happy at school or particularly well (83,4 %)<sup>45</sup>. 94 % said that they had at least one Italian friend, generally met at the encampment (69,1 %) for job reasons (23,4 %) or in school (13,8 %).

Another interesting aspect is the one related to the knowledge and the contact with the public institutions. It is an important indicator strictly connected with the degree of integration, but it also shows the different degrees of commitment by the same institutions toward Roma. The most frequently contacted public offices have been the local Health Department (ASL) (96,9 %), the Centocelle Police Headquarter and the VIIth NAE group (95,9 % and 81,3 %), lastly, the Municipality Council of Rome<sup>46</sup> (89,4 %).

It is also important to record the small knowledge and familiarity with NGO's and other associations. The percentages recorded in 2000 were very meagre, only 8,2 % had a

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<sup>45</sup> See par. 7.4 for detailed informations on Roma schooling project.

<sup>46</sup> With this general definition I intend in particular the VIIth District, where the encampment was located.

superficial knowledge of the Trade Unions and of NGO's (24,7 %) and even Churches and other confessional organisations registered the same low percentages, Mosques included (23,7 %).

There was another significant finding in the answer to the question that requested Roma to describe the more radical changes in their life connected to their presence in Italy: 'here we feel a bigger independence with respect to traditional customs and other related issues' (36,7 %)<sup>47</sup>, the second most frequent answer was 'the end of the fear for the war' (30,0 %) and lastly the fact of living in a more modern country where there will be hopefully more possibility for their children and families (20,0 %).

#### **6.3.8 E Romà Vacharèn<sup>48</sup>**

Some of the questions invited the same Roma to formulate possible proposals for an effective intervention toward them as a group.

Indirectly these observations can give us data from which is possible to infer the faults of the welcoming process: 91,0 % would like to have better hygienic conditions in the place where they have to live; 52 % expressed the desire for a more democratic control by policemen and security officers; a good 54 % would like to become an Italian citizen, 37 % would like to have a steady and well paid job, while 29 % asks for the possibility of regularising their position. Summing up these last two percentages we can have an idea of the seriousness of the problem related with the permit of stay.

The other question was: 'According to you which are the steps that the Italian Government should undertake to improve your life condition?'

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<sup>47</sup> Consideration most frequently expressed by the youngest head of the family.

<sup>48</sup> The Roma Speaking.

71,4 % asked for a structural amelioration of the encampment; 49 % asked for a new amnesty, 34,7 % were in favour of occupation, while 30,6 % requested for a more careful attention on behalf of institutions, for Roma's cultural needs.

They also expressed the desire for a new law that will consider Roma's cultural peculiarity (12,2 %) together with the possibility of obtaining the acknowledgment for their *de facto* marriages (18,4 %), in order to benefit from the article of the Immigration law related to family reunion.

At the end of the questionnaire, there was the question that more amused Roma: they had to imagine to be members of the Italian Government and to be asked to enact initiatives toward the Roma communities and in particular of the Roma refugees. In this case 36,4 % would have liked to convert their permit of stay from temporary to undetermined date while 28,3 % would have granted permit, a home and a job 'to make a life like the Italians, and not like the dogs', as declared by Minka, a young Romni from Sarajevo living in the Casilino 700 encampment; 11,1 % would have increased the sums of money at disposal for the purpose of returning to Bosnia, while another 16 % was fairly subdivided between those who would like to ameliorate the encampments here in Italy, and those who would have preferred more effective initiatives for the cooperation in Bosnia.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### INSTITUTIONAL AND NGO INTERVENTIONS

#### 7.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters of this work I have presented data concerning the general socio economic context that both Roma and Moroccan migrants finds here in Italy and data and informations concerning the population of Casilino 700.

This section will instead be dedicated to the analysis of the interventions that local institutions and NGO's have enacted toward the Roma community living at the encampment during the years of its existence<sup>1</sup>.

All these practices and projects as a whole, will be described and examined because they constitute a paradigmatic example of the Italian policies toward migrants integration, and although the interventions analysed are referring only to the Casilino 700 encampment, they ought to be considered as a model of intervention, a theoretical and practical approach to Roma issues which has continued practically unchanged up to date<sup>2</sup>.

In the last twenty years it has become a consolidated practice for state institutions, to entrust NGO's and other third sector organizations, with the task of managing social emergencies.

Associations, social cooperatives, NGO's and public bodies, respond to public calls for bids, financed by either local institutions or by the national state itself, and dedicated to different kinds of support and integration projects. These organizations deal with the

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<sup>1</sup> The small Maghrebi group had been completely abandoned and they never had been the object of any kind of intervention. For this reason they do not appear in this Chapter.

<sup>2</sup> See par. 8.5.

increasing number of ongoing “social emergencies” and which include school dropouts, deviance, drug addiction, immigration, handicapped and ageing persons. All these phenomena have become target of interventions from the so called third sector or “privato sociale”<sup>3</sup>.

Born initially as a form of solidaristic and voluntary activity, social interventions can be considered today as a well established and important business sector.

Also in Italy, the traditional charities organizations<sup>4</sup>, mostly of a confessional kind and tied to the circuit of Catholic churches, have been replaced by professional private organizations and have become opportunities for entrepreneurial projects in all fields of social interventions<sup>5</sup>.

Statutory bodies, from national to local level, suggest and define the interventions to be made in the different areas. These proposals are then published under form of public call for tenders, and all the different accredited organizations are called to participate presenting their own projects. After a public call for bids, the proposing institution chooses the project that better fulfill all the specifications that the tender requests. Apart from some particular cases, in all average competitions the project is normally entrusted to the organisation that presents the more beneficial economic offer.

Before analysing their interventions at Casilino 700, it is important to make a short digression and give some basic information on their structure and on their importance in the Italian context.

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<sup>3</sup> Is the Italian definition for Non Profit and Third Sector activities.

<sup>4</sup> One famous international example is that of the “Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul”, a Catholic society of apostolic life created by S. Vincenzo de’ Paoli in 1617 with the purpose of fighting poverty. It is still active in 93 countries of the world with more than 20.000 Sisters of Charity.

<sup>5</sup> Catholic organisations continue to have a big part in the management of social emergencies. One example for all is the Caritas (an organisation of the Vicariato di Roma) that publishes every year a national statistical report on immigration.

## **7.2 The market of solidarity: notes on the third sector in Italy**

NGO's often take the legal form of non profit social cooperatives<sup>6</sup>, in this way they make use of the economic advantages offered by the State to this kind of company (like special tax concessions and norms, contractual and previdential facilitations, etc.). Furthermore, if the Cooperative include among its founders a quote equal to the 30 % of associates coming from a "weak category" (disabled, offenders, etc.) they can form a "social integrated cooperative"<sup>7</sup>, a denomination that adds even more benefits (always from the economic point of view). But the most important aspect is the one concerning the contract conditions of the employees. All are enrolled as associates to the cooperative, and in this way their salary, allowances and all the workers rights concerning pensions, illness etc. changes. Due to their position as associates these workers are not subjected to the norms contained in the Workers Statute or in the national category contracts, and the wild deregulation at work in this field of the productive system has been recognised by the State itself, which tried to regulate this sector by mean of a specific law (L.142/01).

This social cooperative project, which began as a social solidarity experiment, has turned today into one of the largest laboratories of precariousness. Among the most important issues are: '... the non applicability of the trade unions norms on workers dismissals, reduced and differentiated previdential contribution according to the Province where the NGO's is working, high salarial and worktime flexibility,

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<sup>6</sup> After the Social Cooperative or the Cultural Association is formed, it can requests to become an NGO (or an ONLUS, Organizzazioni Non Lucrative di Utilità Sociale - Non Profit Organizations of Social Utility) after accreditation. For NGO's the competence for accreditation is of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while for the ONLUS they must be constituted in a specific legal way, and then they can ask to be enrolled in the General Register of ONLUS, under the competence of the Ministry of Finances.

<sup>7</sup> Their denomination is "Cooperatives of B kind". See L. 381 - 08/11/91 artt.1 and 4 G.U. n. 119, 23/05/2002, Decreto 09/11/2001.

predominance of the contract work and high territorial fragmentation of workers ...' (Marinelli, 2004, p. 2).

In this way the NGO's can keep the costs low, thus increasing the chances of winning the public bodies bids.

Often the general structure of the bids and the requisites to be fulfilled in order to participate, are conceived in a way that it is almost impossible for new organizations to compete, because these calls for bids tends to be built in favour of the already existing associations.

For example for what concerns the Roma it is often requested that the proposing organization ought to demonstrate a minimum of five years past experience with Roma in other projects of the same kind and financed by public bodies, like in the case of the schooling projects that I will examine in the next paragraph. On one hand these requirements constitute a guarantee for the funding bodies, but on the other hand they also freeze a situation in which the four biggest organizations (ARCI, CDS, Opera Nomadi and Ermes Capodarco) have been practically acting as a monopoly. Besides, as often happens in Italy, these divisions reflect political allotments and interests. The strong support given to the cooperative system from political parties and trade unions is motivated by direct, strong economic and lobbying interests. The prizes at stake cannot certainly be ignored because they include the administration of entire sectors of social welfare, the division of the funds disbursed through public bids and, of course, the management of *clientes* and patronage relations, a very important resource in Italy, especially in time of elections.

These aspects will be analysed more in-depth in the following paragraph regarding the schooling projects, where it will be shown in more detail how this practice became

consolidated, but here I will deal only with the interventions that have been carried out at the encampment during the period of its life.

### **7.3 NGO's interventions for Casilino 700**

Different voluntary organizations have carried out interventions also for the Roma of Casilino 700 tackling the most diverse aspects. The CIR - Centro Italiano Rifugiati (Italian Refugee Centre, CIR from now on), dealt with the regularisation of Bosnian refugees, Opera Nomadi has been in charge of the management of the camp and of the schooling projects and Médecins Sans Frontières has been responsible for the socio-medical aspect. In the last year of life of the encampment, there has also been a consortium, created by other various associations of a territorial network, but this intervention will not be examined here.

#### **7.3.1 CIR Centro Italiano Rifugiati (Italian Refugee Centre)**

The first intervention that I will take into account had been also the most important because it was related to Roma's legal status. This is an issue of primary importance for the people involved and because it has involved an important and well known international organizations like the CIR. Before describing its actions in Casilino 700 I have to step back a few years and go back to another very important project that this organisation had been in charge of. In 1991, the Minister for Internal Affairs requested the CIR to produce a national census dedicated to the Bosnian refugees in Italy.

The aim of this census<sup>8</sup> was extremely important because when an individual was registered in it, he/she automatically entered into the lists of those who could be regularised as refugees under the National Refugees and Displaced Persons Law directed to Bosnians and other former Yugoslavian citizens (L.390/92).

At the encampment the Bosnian-Montenegrin group has always been the most numerous. All of them came from war zones and arrived in Italy after June 1991. All these requisites meant that they ought to be regularised and entitled to receive assistance under the aforementioned law<sup>9</sup>.

The Casilino 700 encampment existed since 1991, and both the local authorities of the VIIth District and of the Municipality of Rome were well aware of a considerable Bosnian presence there. This can be inferred from the fact that the Municipality provided for this settlement some emergency relief like the periodic water supply, garbage removal and other minor interventions that I have described here in par. 5.2.

Besides, in 1994 the VIIth group NAE<sup>10</sup> and the Municipality of Rome Special Office for Immigration recorded through the Casilino 700 census the presences, places of origin and other data on the residing population. In that occasion 300 persons (96 adults and 204 minors) were registered.

This early Municipal census is important, because it shows that it was impossible for the CIR not to know that in the bidonville of Casilino there were many Bosnian refugees, the majority of which under age and deprived of everything. But no CIR

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<sup>8</sup> For further information on this census, its effects and the way in which it was conducted, see Boursier, G. (1996) "Zingari, profughi a Torino." In Brunello, P. (ed.) **L'urbanistica del disprezzo**. Roma: Manifestolibri. pp. 279-289.

<sup>9</sup> The Law 390/92 also requested to Bosnians, that to be recognised as a refugee, the date of the arrival in Italy must start from June 1991. This was supposedly a security issue, in order to avoid granting a refugee permit to former Yugoslavian citizens that were already present in Italy.

<sup>10</sup> For an explanation of NAE's services and functions see par. 3.5.2 note 20.

employees were to be seen at the encampment until July 1996, when it was known that a partial eviction was to take place.

Why did they wait so long before arriving at the encampment? I can suggest some ideas. To arrive at the encampment before the eviction would have meant that the CIR would have to face all the unsolved, intricate Bosnian legal situation. This consisted of innumerable expulsions order to which nobody ever complied, documents that could not be obtained in a destroyed Bosnia and, last but not less important, a large number of Bosnian citizens to deal with, which had not been registered in the previous census. The eviction would have eliminated part of the problem, dramatically decreasing the size of the refugee population at the encampment and allowing the CIR to deal with a much easier task and without any of the problems represented by a large number of undocumented refugees. In this way they did not have to take in charge the many desperate and difficult cases but only those who were registered, a risible percentage of all those in need of an help.

From 1991 when the encampment was created until the date of July 1996 the number of the inhabitants had steadily increased year after year, and raised from the initial 300 Bosnians (and more or less 150 Moroccans) to circa 1200 individuals. It thus became the largest shanty town in Mediterranean Europe and constituted an explosive social situation. The situation was becoming more and more difficult to be handled, therefore in 1996 the Municipality's authorities decided for a partial eviction of the encampment in order to limit the presence of clandestine and undocumented persons, leaving the others (i.e. the one already inserted in the lists) for the CIR staff to be registered.

After the eviction, at the beginning of July 1996, three staff members of the CIR appeared at the camp offering to those who had been registered as refugees the

possibility of moving to an accommodation centre<sup>11</sup> and the necessary legal aid to appeal against the numerous deportation orders that had been carried out up until then.

I collected files and documents concerning some of the families, organising as best as possible the often incomplete or chaotic documentations. I also explained to the community what the CIR employers and lawyers were up to, trying in the meanwhile to explain also the reasons for which the undocumented could not be regularised, since they had not been registered in the first census.

I was at the encampment the day that the CIR employers arrived. The Roma began to protest against them because they were considered responsible for the fact that many families were not included in the 1991 census, therefore they could not claim for any statutory assistance, even though they had every right to be recognised as refugees. Besides between the years 1992 - 1996 many Roma had been the object of expulsions proceedings, a fact that made their situation even more complex<sup>12</sup>.

There was a bad mood at the encampment, especially from those whose names did not appeared in the 1991 lists. In that occasion I had carried out a service of negotiation and mediation between the CIR and the encampment, hoping that my intervention could benefit the Roma. A couple of days later I was contacted by the person in charge of the project who asked me for a private meeting

On the following day at the meeting, he proposed that I co-operate with the CIR and I was made aware that the project favoured the relocation of the Roma refugees into a welcoming centre situated at 100 km. from Rome, in a small village named Civita Castellana. The place where Roma were supposed to be hosted was a religious centre,

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<sup>11</sup> A religious reception and welcoming centre, the *Fraterna Domus* in Civita Castellana.

<sup>12</sup> It must be remembered that in Italy the refugee and asylum law grant this status to an *individual* whose life is at risk in his/her country for political, war or other reasons. The law does not consider whole ethnic groups as subject for asylum. Hence the difficulties for Roma to have access to this status.



the *Fraterna Domus*. The CIR asked me to cooperate with them to prevent the failure of the transfer operation since Civita Castellana was the only solution that the Municipality of Rome could offer.

I tried over and over again to persuade them that such a solution was unacceptable, explaining that I was not going to co-operate at such a badly conceived project whose only evident aim was that of not losing the European funds for the refugees of former Yugoslavia but evidently, what mattered the most, were the funds linked to the operation rather than the needs of the Roma.

My proposal was to integrate the first census re-opening the lists and adding all those who were entitled to and who were left out the first time, asking further that the CIR lawyers took care of all the previous expulsion proceedings illegitimately<sup>13</sup> issued to the Bosnians before the CIR arrival at the encampment. This proposal was almost immediately refused. Arguments against included practical difficulties and also the fear that if rumours spread among the Roma community that the Casilino 700 population was to be regularised, they would arrive *en masse* in order to benefit from what they would consider as a new amnesty.

I already knew the *Fraterna Domus*, because after the settlement's destruction, eight Maghrebi families had been hosted there, and there had been many problems. It was impossible to cook meals by themselves and other problems arose with the Priest in charge of this institution, that was said to have employed immigrants to renew the roof, and had not paid them properly. To this we must add the fact that Roma families are much larger than the average ones and it should have appeared obvious that the accommodation would have been completely unsuitable for Roma. Lastly, the project did

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<sup>13</sup> Illegitimate because as Bosnians they were to be considered as refugees, making therefore illegal their expulsion proceedings.

not include a word on the effects on the host village where the Roma should be “relocated”. Not one sentence in the project was dedicated to the possible social consequences caused by the presence of such a large number of unemployed persons with no social security and deprived of the possibility to practise their own small trades, metal gathering, small recycling and *manghèl*. These activities by their nature are strictly embedded with the urban territories and can not certainly be practised in small rural areas such as Civita Castellana since this place was far away from Rome and from any of the possibilities working occasions.

On this basis, at the end of the meeting, I told him that I would show the Roma the pictures of the *Fraterna Domus* and that I would advise them to go in person to see the place and decide for themselves. Some of the youngest head of family went there to take a look. After having visited the place, no one from the Bosnian group accepted to be moved there, and decided instead to remain at the encampment.

Following their refusal to move to the Civita Castellana Centre, the CIR disappeared from the camp altogether and confined itself to dealing with the appeals from regulars against the deportation orders. As to the assistance project for the 300 Bosnian refugees of Casilino, who had never received any help since their arrival during the years of the war, it came to nothing.

The CIR carried out also other assistance initiatives of this same kind concerning other groups of Roma. One of these projects is the SUCRE<sup>14</sup> (acronym for Southern Europe Co-operation for Refugees and Exiles). Although it was directed toward Roma from Romania and not anymore to Bosnians, it is worth to read the final report that describes

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<sup>14</sup> SUCRE is an acronym for Sud Europa: Cooperazione per i Rifugiati e gli Esuli (Southern Europe: Co-operation for Refugees and Exiles).

the number of cases treated and gives a general evaluation on the intervention. A passage from the report on the 2001 SUCRE project reads:

‘As far as the activities of the offices located in Rome are concerned, the head office has provided assistance in 24 cases concerning members of the Roma ethnic group for a total number of 52 persons. The main interventions have consisted in assisting in the search for permanent accommodations, looking for a job, giving legal aid concerning the procedure for asylum and, as to the Dublin cases, giving legal aid to obtain the annulment of the deportation orders and of the prohibition of re-entry decided by another European state. As to the other office, which since July 2001 has dealt exclusively with the allocation of the first assistance contribution on behalf of the prefecture of Rome, it has received 251 asylum seekers applications from Romanian nationals, of which about 85% were members of the Roma ethnic group. With regard to this last datum, the institutions competent to examine asylum claims denounce the instrumental use of the asylum claim made by Roma, who file the application with the only aim of receiving the first assistance contribution without completing the asylum procedure once they obtain the contribution’ (CIR, 2001, p. 4).

As it can be seen, only a very small number of people were able to regularise their position and in receiving the help they needed from this organization. The last sentence implied distrust, and the Roma who sought help to regularise their position are accused of making an instrumental use of the asylum procedure.

It is disquieting to see how prejudices and commonplaces are at work even among specialists in the protection of refugees and asylum. After Roma’s refusal to be deported to the Civita Castellana place, the CIR employees disappeared suddenly, much in the same way they appeared in the first place. Once again the Casilino 700 Roma community came back to rely for its needs, on the vast, busy community of private Roman lawyers<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> The number of lawyers officially enrolled to the Lawyers Register in Rome is equal to the total number of lawyers present in the whole of France. Fancelli C. Regent Public Prosecutor at the Appeal Court of Rome “Inaugural Relation of the Judicial Year 2008 in Rome”. Martirano, D. (2008) Roma città d’avvocati. *Corriere della Sera*, 27 Jan. pp. 14-15. [online]. Available from: [http://archivioistorico.corriere.it/2008/gennaio/27/Roma\\_citta\\_avvocati\\_Piu\\_che\\_co\\_9\\_080127041.shtml](http://archivioistorico.corriere.it/2008/gennaio/27/Roma_citta_avvocati_Piu_che_co_9_080127041.shtml)

### **7.3.2 Opera Nomadi**

The other organization that was working at the encampment was the Opera Nomadi, the first Italian Foundation whose aims and works are specifically directed to the help and protection of Roma people. They began their intervention at Casilino 700 in 1992, the year in which the camp joined the Municipality's schooling projects.

Opera Nomadi's activities, guidelines and models of intervention are very important, especially when we think that up to the year 2000 it had represented the voice of Roma, operating in exclusive and which for many years dealt with every intervention directed toward the Roma as a group.

The analysis of the CIR intervention was central because it dealt with structural aspects like that of citizenship and juridical status and with the practical assistance to refugees. In the case of Opera Nomadi we are dealing with a long duration and continuative action, directed exclusively toward Roma population and focused on the theme of integration, of which schooling represents an important part (especially when we think that half of the Roma population in Rome is constituted for the largest part by young and underage).

For a long time it had been the only organization to benefit from the funds for schooling of Roma children until the year 2000, when the arrival of other associations such as ARCI, CDS and Erme - Comunità Capodarco replaced it, winning all the Municipality bids concerning Roma schooling projects.

The staff which materially worked on the field was constituted for the large part by young social workers, often graduating students, who were organized on informal basis. Their tasks were that of accompanying the children to school and to sensitise the

families to the importance of enrolling their children and to support their education, in accordance with the assignments laid down in the agreement signed with the municipality of Rome<sup>16</sup>.

It is a very delicate job that in the non authorized camps such as Casilino 700 and others, also included the care of personal hygiene of children before entering schools, a very difficult task when we think at the Casilino 700 material living conditions. All the other practices related to social integration (legal counselling, health care, etc.) that represents a major aspect of the social work in these encampments, were not included in the municipality past bids and were therefore never activated.

I have already shown in this work how the bureaucratic situation of the Roma is extremely tangled and that they are frequently victims of a strong racial prejudice that has no comparison with any other community. In such a situation even those activities that are generally carried out without difficulty by the other immigrants, like reporting a crime or accident, or requesting a permit of stay, can turn into an odyssey through bureaucracy. Especially if we consider the high rate of illiteracy amongst them, the fact that many Roma do not speak Italian well (nearly all of the elderly for example), and that the local Police Offices do not have always an interpreter at hand, we can have an idea of the difficulties that arise. All these issues are widely known by whoever has come into contact with the camps, but still a legal aid service free of charge or a social services information desk was never organized. Even easy, yet necessary tasks, such as accompanying the Roma to the Police or Foreign Office, were strongly discouraged by the project coordinators. The explanation given for this behaviour was that the Roma needed to learn how to become self-reliant, an opinion which can certainly be shared

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<sup>16</sup> See par. 7.4

but that does not seem to take into consideration the substantial difficulties that these people experience when they interact with institutional bodies, especially when such bodies are in charge of control actions. An example of the different treatment they receive is the way in which many deportation orders have been decided even in cases concerning the so-called “undeportable”, that is to say the Bosnians who entered Italy after June 1991 and who were therefore entitled to the protection ensuing from the refugee status.

Another negative aspect was the fact that the level of contact and interaction of the staff members with the camp was very low, and the precarious job conditions in the non profit sector that I have described here before provoked an incessant turnover in the social workers employed. Only during the first two years<sup>17</sup> of the encampment’s existence there had been a truly motivated staff member who had tried to make herself useful beyond the assignments listed in the job description, but after 1994 the work of the members of staff at the camp went on with the usual task of taking the children to school and, in the summer months, to the sea or the lake with the municipality’s Holiday Resort Project.<sup>18</sup>

Another aspect is that of the political representation of Roma, an issue to which this foundation devoted many efforts and that is worth careful analysis.

The Opera Nomadi strongly requested forms of Roma representation, also because the institutions refused to relate to an assembly of head of the families, and for this reason four Roma (male head of families) were choose by the same Opera Nomadi and entrusted to act as delegates on behalf of the Casilino population. These Roma were all

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<sup>17</sup> From 1992 to 1994.

<sup>18</sup> The CCV - Centri Cittadini di Vacanza (City Holiday Resorts) allow to destitute Italian and foreign children to leave the city during the summer season and being hosted in one of the various Municipality’s Centres. Daily excursions are organised to the holiday resorts near Rome.

coming from the most preminent families at the encampment, therefore the effective power of representation of these delegates was very small. The poorest and less important families felt that they had not been fairly represented in this delegation.

Everybody, from the foundation and the other institutions involved preferred to deal with as few persons as possible, no matter how appropriate (or inappropriate) they were as general representatives.

At Casilino 700 the intervention dealt exclusively with schooling, but in the winter of 1999 Opera Nomadi tried to develop a project that could constitute a small source of income for the Roma.

The “*Phralipè*” and “*Spartacus*” co-operatives of Opera Nomadi tried to turn a small area inside the settlement (an area where disused sports fields used to be) into a second-hand, do-it-yourself and antique market place. Normally the Roma used to go to the “Porta Portese Nuova” market in the VIIth District, to sell the things gathered during the searches for recycling. But the VIIth District Council forbade them to go because they had no authorization to engage in the commerce, and because the others officially registered ambulants protested against what they saw as a favoritism for Roma people. For these motives the market was organized inside the encampment.

The initiative was to last for the five Sundays preceding the Christmas of 1998 with the intention of converting it into a permanent source of income.

Each member of the co-operatives paid 15 euro for the membership fee, the rearrangement and clean-up costs of the market and for the power supply connection. From the day of its opening the market went on for about three consecutive Sundays until it closed down.

This was due to different reasons. First of all to the location and the typology of the market, but also to bureaucratic and administrative impediments.

The sale of the gathered objects worked only as long as it took place outside the context of the camp, in places where there already was an established commerce, like the market of “Porta Portese Nuova”, but as soon as the camp itself became the point of sale no one in the neighbourhood went to the newly arranged market area near the disused sports fields.

The only ones customers were those who were already used to going to the encampment, i.e. the staff members of Opera Nomadi and various friends or militants from solidarity and political organizations. What is more, the Roma themselves were the first to desert it, as they knew only too well that such a point of sale offered limited possibilities of earning some money.

The most serious problems, however, were derived from the fact that the co-operatives that had organized the market had failed to apply for permission to the competent District offices before opening the market, which had actually begun operating without a license.

Other administrative problems arose from security reasons due to the presence of the *Canalone*, an old disused railway line below the ground level<sup>19</sup> which run parallel to via Casilina and made it dangerous for vehicles to transit on that stretch of road.

Then, there was the traffic wardens’ refusal to authorize access through a driveway if a junction, which from Via Casilina would lead to the camp, was not built too.

After the market was shut down no other attempt were made to make it continue its activity. In the meantime, also the VIIth District’s Council had changed its position and

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<sup>19</sup> See par. 5.2



after an initial stage of helpful attitude and interest in the initiative, it actually began placing obstacles in its way with the request that the market be moved to some other place. While waiting for the imminent eviction, the Roma had therefore to go back to their informal commerces<sup>20</sup>.

### **7.3.3 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)**

The last intervention that I am going to take into account is that carried out by the International organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (from now on MSF). The project of this NGO at the camp in Via Casilina 700 lasted two years, from October 1996 to October 1998. The intervention's aims and objectives were devoted:

‘to improve the living conditions for the nomadic peoples through medical, logistical and environmental health actions; to involve the local and health authorities in the assistance to this marginalised population; to involve this community in the management of its own problems ...’ (Caritas, 1998, pp.274-296).

The young Roma who had offered to co-operate (among whom there were also some women) took a vocational training course for ASC – Agenti di Salute Comunitaria (Community Health Workers) and followed an internship at the NGO “Casa dei Diritti Sociali” (CDS)<sup>21</sup> of Rome, during which they worked at an information desk for immigrants as interpreters and facilitators. Their work at the camp involved mediating between the Roma community and the institutions. The young Roma received a monthly salary of about 100 – 155 euro.

In my opinion, the most important aspect of this project was that it considered the Roma as active participants in the intervention, enabling some of the adolescents of the camp

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<sup>20</sup> One of these markets, called “Mercati dell’usato e dell’occasione”, was still active until 2008 in the parking lot of via Longoni, in the VIth District.

<sup>21</sup> The ASC cooperated also with other organizations such as the Health and Social Services, the CIR, the “Istituto Ospedaliero Dermosifilipatico di S. Maria e S. Gallicano”, the Italian Consortium of Solidarity, and others.

to fully and legitimately take part in the project. Another innovation was that at the beginning there were among the participants also four girls (two from Bosnia and two from Romania), even though in the end only one girl continued working as a mediator. According to the project, the mediators who had been trained at the course could have been employed later on by some of the organizations with which they had been in contact during the training, internship and working phases:

‘... We find that we are part of a group of realities that are interested in taking in the trainees and that considers the ASC’s to be a resource of central importance that can be shared with the rest of society, and we envisage that some of the above mentioned organizations will continue investing in these interpreters and facilitators on their way to literacy’ (Caritas, 1998, p. 273).

The project, however, ended in 1998 and the eviction of the camp made it impossible to obtain new funds. In the meantime, Silvana, Tihi, Zakane and the others who had taken part in the project found themselves back at the camp completely forgotten.

As to the above-mentioned organizations that were to keep on investing in these young Roma and helping them in the integration and job-seeking process, no one heard anymore from them.

I do not know whether the members of staff who implemented the project realised that expectations had been raised in the young participants.

This intervention (which in spite of everything can still be considered the best one ever carried out at the camp, at least as far as its guiding principles are concerned) turned out to be as intermittent and frustrating as the other ones. Its ultimate aim was to single out and train other ASC’s who were to ‘take responsibility for continuing the activities of the project’ (Caritas, 1998, p. 23) in the future, but what was not clear was how this was to take place and particularly what concrete employment offers were available for the

young Roma who had been involved in the project for a short period of time and had then been abandoned.

#### **7.4. The schooling of Roma children: from the “Lacio Drom” experience to the present day**

Among the institutional interventions carried out toward the Roma community there is but one which can be considered as the most important, and is that regarding the schooling of Roma children.

This project is the more systematic and the one of longest duration, and for these reasons it plays also an important role for the evaluation of the Municipality’s policies toward Roma. At the same time, it can also be used as an indicator to determine the level of effectiveness of this effort.

The schooling of Roma began in Italy in 1959 with the experience of the first so called “Lacio Drom” (Good trip) classrooms<sup>22</sup>.

In the beginning it was enacted in quite an informal way, i.e. relying on the will of particularly motivated teachers who volunteered to go into Roma encampments with the aim of fighting illiteracy and teaching basic elements of reading and writing to Roma children.

The Opera Nomadi, founded by Don Bruno Nicolini, begun in 1965 a collaboration with the Ministry of Education (and with the University of Padova) with the aim of supporting the experiment of the Lacio Drom classrooms for Roma and Sinti children.

In the year 1971-1972 there were 60 of these classrooms in the whole Italy.

Opera Nomadi was made responsible for the daily transport of Roma students, while the Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Padova was entrusted with the organisation of

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<sup>22</sup> See also par. 2.5.1.

yearly courses of specialization and training dedicated to the teachers involved in the Lacio Drom classrooms. At the same time, it was entrusted with the task of developing research and promote scientific knowledge concerning the education of Roma children. Finally, in 1982 the special classrooms Lacio Drom were officially closed down, and Roma children were integrated in the normal ones. In 1986, the agreement between the Opera Nomadi and the Ministry of Education ended, thus decreeing the passage of responsibilities from the Opera Nomadi to the state.

During the late 80's many Italian public institutions, including the Department for Public Education, suffered from severe cut in expenses, and from 1993 the support teachers were considered as a role *in esaurimento*<sup>23</sup> to be used only for children with severe forms of mental or physical disabilities.

In lack of a specific legislation, the rules regarding both education and educational support to Roma and immigrant children are based on the 9th article of the Italian law L.970/70 which states that it is one teacher's duty to devote part of lessons time to helping child who remained backwards (any teacher, since no specific formation was requested).

Unfortunately, like many other Italian laws, also this one expresses a will, a mere affirmation of principle, giving directions that could have never been put in practice due to the lack of the necessary financial coverage. Roma children had been enrolled into Italian schools but the task of integration has been left much to the goodwill of this or that school and of her teachers. Although the role of the support teachers was of great importance in this process, there have been no plans to replace them, and the school reform undertaken in 2008 by the Berlusconi government made such severe cuts to the

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<sup>23</sup> This meant that no new hiring will be made for this role.

educational system that there are now cases of schools where the support teacher can not be employed not even in the case of disabled children<sup>24</sup>.

During the year 1990's a separation occurred between the Lacio Drom journal members and founders, and the Opera Nomadi. Various events led to the retirement of Don Bruno as the President of Opera Nomadi, who remained instead in charge of the Centro Studi Zingari, home to the Lacio Drom review and group. The group who founded the review was getting old, and had failed to create a group of scholars who could have continued their work.

In particular, for what concern the situation in Rome, the new Opera Nomadi management, led by his new President Massimo Converso, slowly severed the ties with the Lacio Drom group journal.

The Opera Nomadi continued to work at national level, and in the case of the city of Rome, from 1994 to 1999 the "new" Opera Nomadi Lazio led by Massimo Converso has been entrusted of the schooling projects, but from the triennial of 1999 – 2002 and up to the last annual bid (concerning the year 2009) all have been won by other organisations, which are at present time in charge of the intervention in the Roman encampments (ARCI, CDS, Ermes – Comunità Capodarco are the main ones).

It is very interesting to read these public bids, for their analysis can allow the reader to see how these projects are built and structured.

When we read the last triennial bids (and precisely the one that concerns the triennial 2005 - 2008), we see how it is conceived and written in a way to restrict the access to the bids to the sole Associations and NGO's who already had been entrusted by the state

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<sup>24</sup> See the article on this theme published by the Italian newspaper la Repubblica. De Luca, M. N. (2009) Taglio agli insegnanti di sostegno. Torna la classe differenziale. **la Repubblica**, 18 Nov. p. 15. [online]. Available from: [http://www.repubblica.it/2009/11/sezioni/scuola\\_e\\_universita/servizi/insegnanti-sostegno/insegnanti-sostegno/insegnanti-sostegno.html](http://www.repubblica.it/2009/11/sezioni/scuola_e_universita/servizi/insegnanti-sostegno/insegnanti-sostegno/insegnanti-sostegno.html) [Accessed November 2009].

institutions to run projects concerning the Roma group. The other conditions requested further restrict the access, making in the end possible the participation of only very few NGO's. Certainly this is a way to guarantee that the organisations which are participating possess a prior experience in this field, and that their logistic structures results appropriate to the task. But all these rules have made the mechanism of the bid nearly automatic, because all these conditions seem tailored to the already existing associations.

The reading of the specifications for the entrusting of the schooling projects 2005 - 2008 is very interesting. This also relates to the issue of the ambiguity in the definitions to which I have hinted a few lines before. The title of the bids speaks about "*Roma children and adolescents*", while in the rest of the text they are indifferently named also as "*Nomads*" or "*Nomadic communities*".

Another aspect then, is the one that concerns the goals that this project intends to reach. The formulation of these objectives is so generic, vague and approximate to make impossible, in the practice, both to verify that the goals have been achieved and to evaluate them.

For example, how is it possible in practice (but also in the Italian language) to verify and evaluate that it will be *facilitated* to the 'responsibilisation of adults toward their children's schooling'<sup>25</sup>, or to '*favour the structuration of a positive behaviour toward education in nomadic communities*'<sup>26</sup>. Also relevant is point A of the bids, in which the Municipality requests to the winning association to 'favour the practical realisation of children's rights sanctioned by the International Convention on Children's rights

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<sup>25</sup> Comune di Roma Dipartimento XI. **Capitolato per l'affidamento della realizzazione del progetto di scolarizzazione per i bambini e gli adolescenti rom per il triennio scolastico 2005-2008**, comma C.

<sup>26</sup> Comune di Roma Dipartimento XI. **Capitolato per l'affidamento della realizzazione del progetto di scolarizzazione per i bambini e gli adolescenti rom per il triennio scolastico 2005-2008**, comma D.

ratified by UN the 20 November 1989 and implemented by the Italian government with the Law n.176 of the 27 may 1991<sup>27</sup>. Incredibly, the same Municipality that allows children and their families to live in huts and containers asks NGO's to assume commitments that the same Municipality are first to disregard.

Lastly, one of the sections of the bids is dedicated to the personnel selections that practically will be carrying on the projects in the various encampments. In the bid it is only requested that the social workers involved submit their curricula, although the qualifications reported in this same curriculum will not be calculated as a score for the winning of the projects.

The social workers involved in the schooling projects must in practice only submit it without being requested any specific formation.

The professional figures requested in the bids are that of the site warden (*Operatore al campo*) and that of the professional educator (*Educatore professionale*). Social workers of medium and low level, to which are nonetheless entrusted extremely delicate and difficult tasks (Comune di Roma, 2005, Artt. 1 and 2).

The relatively low skill of the professional figures involved, and the lack of an appropriate training gave origin to a situation in which these NGO's that for years have had the monopoly of the schooling projects, have not produced any analytical written material on it, at least none that can be accessed by the public<sup>28</sup>. From the year 2000, and up to date in 2010, all of the three major organisations (ARCI, CdS and Ermes

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<sup>27</sup> Comune di Roma Dipartimento XI. **Capitolato per l'affidamento della realizzazione del progetto di scolarizzazione per i bambini e gli adolescenti rom per il triennio scolastico 2005-2008**, comma A.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, on the Municipality of Rome's website, the part dedicated to Roma in the section **Roma Interculturale: Rom, Sinti e Camminanti**. [online]. Available from: <http://www.romamultietnica.it/en/rom-sinti-e-camminanti.html> [Accessed June 2006]. See also: Comune di Roma. **Scolarizzazione nomadi Anno Scolastico 2007-2008** [online]. These data are not anymore available on the Municipality's website but I have printed them when they were online. Available from: [www.comune.roma.it/repository/.../scheda%20rom%20a.s.%2007-08.doc](http://www.comune.roma.it/repository/.../scheda%20rom%20a.s.%2007-08.doc) [Accessed January 2007].

Capodarco) entrusted of the schooling projects for Roma children on behalf of the Municipality of Rome have never yet released any public report, statistic, leaflet or other kind of material on the results and data concerning the projects they have been in charge of since these last ten years. The only available data are those offered by the Municipality of Rome's XIth Department and it only reports the number of Roma children enrolled in Roman schools.

The last official census of the Roma population goes back to 1994 and it counted a total of 5.467 Roma, of which at least half were under aged. After 14 years from this first census, and considering the arrivals from other countries such as Romania we can assume that their number in Rome is around the number of 10.000 persons<sup>29</sup>. In an article appeared on the Municipality of Rome's website until the year 2009, we found that: '[in 2007] there have been 2.029 Roma pupils enrolled in schools (from primary to high schools, against the 1.836 of the years 2005 - 2006; in infant schools they are 399 and were 313 last year ...'<sup>30</sup>.

If we observe the trend of presences in compulsory schools we can certainly confirm that there has been a considerable increase in the number of minor involved. But how much this number corresponds to effective competencies and literacy abilities by the Roma students, is still to be demonstrated. Apart from the observation gathered from my fieldwork and here reported in par. 7.4.2, in my personal research experience I have observed how standards considered sufficient for a Roma child, are not at all equivalent to the ones asked to the non Roma children.

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<sup>29</sup> The data released by the Municipality of Rome in 2009 recorded 7.177 presences. Comune di Roma, Commissario Straordinario per l'Emergenza Nomadi (2009) **Il Piano Nomadi**. [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed March 2010].

<sup>30</sup> These informations were reported in the Municipality of Rome's website until January 2009, when the page was removed. See note 21.



There are lower expectations for Roma children, it is expected from them to have fewer results, and teachers are sufficiently satisfied when, at the end of the school year, the child succeeds in writing and reading some simple sentences in the Italian language.

It comes naturally to ask whether the main objective of the schooling project is the real acquisition of competencies or to reduce the number of children who will be found begging in the streets.

Nobody has never ever requested that other indicators ought to be introduced apart from the statistical ones concerning the sole presences in the classrooms. Quantity has become the measure of success, if success can be spoken of, given the exiguousness of the reached results.

It is time to reread critically these data. The quantitative aspect cannot give any account of the success or the failure of these projects, and it is now time that the funding institutions are able to undertake more accurate and systematic verifications of these projects. Lastly, it is very rare that the institutions carefully verify the progresses of these projects.

Incredible as it is, the reports on the projects are compiled by the same NGO's that are, practically, acting as both controllers and controlled, since the Municipality's inspections (when there are) never happen by surprise, but by mutual agreement with the NGO to which the project is entrusted.

The schooling projects cannot be anymore evaluated only from the point of view of the formal accomplishments, like for example, a certain number of presences in the classrooms. Unfortunately, up to date, the only documentation is represented by these qualitative forms of sampling.

Also, it appears there has been no consideration of such poverty in the discussion, neither has there been any significant effort to involve in these projects other more qualified figure for example professionals or academics, or requesting that more qualified personnel be involved in future projects.

We are very far from the fertile debates and from the continuous production of researches, surveys, articles that the “Lacio Drom” journal group produced from the 1960’s and throughout the 1990’s. This impoverishment is also visible in the lack of in-depth analysis on the efficaciousness of the schooling projects, as they are evaluated only from a quantitative point of view of the enrolments and presences.

But not only are the NGO’s proceeding toward this self referenced way because the same Municipality, in the writing of the public bids, has never consulted any scientific figure for either support or counselling.

In this way for years, academy on one side, and institutions and the private sector on the other, have proceeded in a glorious isolation.

#### **7.4.1 Wild child: Romanì vs. Gadjos socialization**

Before proceeding to a more detailed description of Roma schooling projects I will present a short introduction on Roma childhood at the encampment based on the observation during my fieldwork, and on the differences existing between Roma and non Roma early socialization processes.

Children’s education during the first years of life is a duty mainly performed by mothers and elder sisters, but around the fourth year of age it can be described more as a collective process. During this phase grandparents, father and other relatives and friends interact and expand the length of intimacy with the child.

Romani norms and codes of conduct that rule the wider social context are apprehended daily, under the guidance of parents and grandparents. During this early stage of socialization, children learn how to conform to the community's expectations earning a good reputation as a good Roma or Romni.

Roma attitudes toward childhood, and their child-rearing techniques (*maternage* from now on) are very different from the contemporary Italian ones. For example, the Roma child is breast fed until the age of three, four years old, and is never left alone in the hut, but is carried everywhere by her mother or elder sisters, in a large shawl used as a baby bag.

Until the baby is able to walk, it is kept close to her mother's breast and the stage during which the baby crawls around on his knees is absent. The encampment can be full of dangers for a small child, from rusty nails to broken glasses to other dangers. I have underlined these aspects because they constitute key factors in Roma's primary socialization and they imprint upon their adult life

It is not in my intention and neither it is aim of this thesis, to conduct an in-depth analysis on Roma's *maternage* techniques, but it is important at least to introduce them, because they allow the gathering of important information on the context in which the schooling projects take place.

Theories of modern Ethnopaediatrics, all agrees in distinguishing two main models of *maternage*, respectively defined like "high contact" and "low contact" and on the fact that both models have important repercussions on the child's development (Stork, 1986, 1999). The first is present in nearly all the pre-industrial society and relates to a model in which mother and child are always close to each other, because the baby is carried on his mother's back. In this care-taking package, the relation between mother and child is

based on the physical contact. The second model, became a distinctive trait of industrial societies, and is characterised by a physical distance and by visual and verbal communication rather than physical contact (Balsamo, 2006, p. 84).

The author states that a healthy child growth must include the satisfaction of important child needs through a series of actions, which on the whole lead to a harmonic child development.

These factors are indicated as: Contact (physical contact between child and mother), containment (the need for the baby to feel “held”), communication (physical, visual and verbal) and feeding. To these we must add other four important elements like breast feeding, massaging, baby carrying and co-sleeping.

All these conditions and functions, results to be better satisfied by the non industrial *maternage*, in which the mother practises the high contact care-taking package. Besides, within this model, mothers are supported and helped by the whole extended family and the vicinity and intimacy that they develop in their daily contact with the child, gives children more security and self awareness (Balsamo, 2006, p. 89).

In conclusion, from a psychological perspective the sum of these *maternage* practices, contributes to form young individuals generally more autonomous and independent when compared to their peers reared with the low contact model. Within the Roma community, the effects of this education are visible, especially during the interactions with their Italian counterparts in schools.

In spite of the difficult environmental circumstances Roma children are considered and treated as responsible individuals from a young age. The patronising condescendence with which we Italians treat our children is unknown in the Roma culture, and the freedom they experiment with living in the encampment is virtually unlimited.

I remember an episode during one of the first *Giuvgierdàn*<sup>31</sup> I participated to. A very small child was trying to cut a tomato with a huge butcher knife. I was worried and wanted to help her, but her mother told me to leave her be, for she was “only small but not stupid” and she would not cut herself.

Considering a child as a small person facilitates the contact with the external reality through the direct personal experience and this small responsibility engagement.

The average Italian child, nurtured according to the low contact model and raised in the limit freedom and autonomy of a city apartment, has certainly less difficulties to adapt to the school rhythm and rites, because of the limited freedom of exploration and movements that have characterised his early age. Child’s vital impulses have already been carefully rasped away according to the principles of what Alice Miller calls “black pedagogy” (Miller, 1989, 1996)<sup>32</sup>. For Roma children this process does not happen, therefore they are considered by teachers as *enfants sauvages* in need of a process of re-socialization to make them more docile and more apt to the task of sitting in silence for four or more hours in the classroom.

I will show further on<sup>33</sup> how this tendency to “re-socialize” Roma children informs the process of schooling and integration, but for the moment I will go back to the description of the schooling projects as a whole, and in the details concerning the Casilino 700 encampment.

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<sup>31</sup> *Giuvgierdàn* is celebrated the 6th of May by Roma communities, it is the day of St. George, venerated by Roma since his figure is recognised in Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic religions.

<sup>32</sup> The important psychoanalytical theories of Alice Miller on childhood development, have offered new insights on the effects of our model of *maternage* and child education, underlying the effects of a kind of educational system, diffused in most of western societies, to which the author gives the name of “Black pedagogy”.

<sup>33</sup> See in this paragraph the interview with D. Forte, the teacher in charge of the support to Roma children

#### 7.4.2 The schooling at the Casilino 700

The Municipality of Rome through its XIth Department publishes on its website general data on this schooling which, year after year, has known a general progressive growth for what concern the number of Roma children enrolled in public schools<sup>34</sup>.

These data indicates that from 1999 to 2004, the number of Roma children involved with the schooling projects has increased by 50%. From the 1161 enrolled in the school year 1999/2000 to the 2157 of the years 2003/2004<sup>35</sup>. Although encouraging, these numbers are far below the average, especially when we consider that Roma presence in Rome has increased due to the massive arrival of Romanian Roma, and is estimated, for the year 2008, from 8.000 to 10.000 people, more than half of which under age.

These figures concerning the pupils enrolled and effectively going to school was rising every year of a small percentage, but to my sad surprise I discovered during my fieldwork that many of the children that were supposed to be going in school, could not in fact neither write nor read.

The schooling at the Casilina 700 encampment begun in 1992. In this first part I am presenting data gathered at the schools “F. Cecconi” and “R. Pezzani” who had in their classes all the schooled children of the encampment. These data are going from 1993 to 1998 and have been personally verified through both official School register and ethnography. The registration of students, due to the recently introduced regulations on privacy protection (L.196/2003), does not allow anymore gathering the pupil’s names in order to undertake a cross data control.

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<sup>34</sup> The expression “public schools”, opposite to the British ones, defines the Italian institutes for education (primary and secondary schools and colleges) run by the State and for which inscription fees are particularly low. In Italy they represent the large majority of the institutes.

<sup>35</sup> Source: Comune di Roma Dipartimento XI, (2000) **Scolarizzazione Nomadi**. More recent data on schooling projects were unavailable and the old ones were removed from the Municipality of Rome’s website.

The data examined here regards in particular the Bosnian group enrolled at primary “F. Cecconi” and “R. Pezzani” schools which welcomed the minor of the encampment.

In these same schools during the early years of the encampment life (1993 - 1996) there was a support teacher with special help functions. According to the NAE census of Roma minor of schooling age<sup>36</sup>, their number at Casilina 700 encampment was 204 of whom 180 were Bosnians and 81 Romanians<sup>37</sup>.

General data tended to show a slight progressive increase for what concerned the enrollments, but what I was interested in was the continuity and the results. For this reason I have proceeded with a cross-examination that included the children names, their enrollment and their effective frequencies on the totality of effective schooldays.

The following table shows the educational curricula of the 22 pupils enrolled at the “F. Cecconi” during the years 1993-1998.

In spite of the partiality of the material collected it is already possible to have an idea of the number of early school leavers.

In the first column are indicated children with progressive numbers, in the second column there is the date birth and in the subsequent ones are shown respectively the year of enrolling and the days effectively attended compared to the total number of schooling days.

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<sup>36</sup> Source: Comune di Roma, Ufficio Speciale Immigrazione (1997) Censimento Nomadi Novembre 1995 **Lacio Drom**, Zingari a Roma oggi. (2): 30 and ff.

<sup>37</sup> A number certainly underestimated since not all of the Casilino 700 inhabitants were recorded in this census.

Tab. 7.1. School "F. Cecconi", Presences and enrolling of Nomads.

Pupil	Year of birth	Enrolled 1993/94	Presences 1993/94 Mar. Jun.	Enrolled 1996/97 Sept. Apr.	Presences 1996/97 Sept. Apr.	Enrolled 1997/98	Presences 1997/98 Oct. Nov.
1	1985	Yes	0/60	Yes	23/148	Yes	0/41
2	1987	Yes	0/60	Yes	23/148	Yes	0/41
3	1986	Yes	55/60	Yes	41/148	Yes	20/41
4	1988	Yes	59/60	Yes	84/148	Yes	12/41
5	1984	n.e.		Yes	23/148	Yes	0/41
6	1983	Yes	16/60	Yes	0/148	Yes	0/41
7	1989	n.e.		Yes	89/148	Yes	34/41
8	1985	n.e.		Yes	0/148	Yes	0/41
9	1986	n.e.		Yes	11/148	Yes	14/41
10		Yes	10/60	Yes	0/148	Yes	0/41
11	1988	n.e.		Yes	80/148	Yes	29/41
12	1986	n.e.		Yes	73/148	Yes	0/41
13	1987	n.e.		Yes	93/148	Yes	30/41
14	1983	Yes	40/60	Yes	65/148	Yes	0/41
15	1984	n.e.		Yes	1/148	Yes	0/41
16	1983	n.e.		Yes	22/148	Yes	0/41
17	1985	n.e.		Yes	0/148	Yes	0/41
18	1989	Yes	7/60	Yes	0/148	Yes	0/41
19	1989	Yes	36/60	Yes	0/148	Yes	0/41
20	1982	n.e.		Yes	100/148	Yes	32/41
21	1986	n.e.		Yes	81/148	Yes	10/41
22	1988	n.e.		Yes	92/148	Yes	20/41

Source: School "F. Cecconi".

As we can see most of those enrolled attended school with intermittency, as it is shown on the Table nearly half of the enrolled attended school for less than 25 days on a total of 148 schooling days (years 1996/97).

Some of the pupils appearing in this list were enrolled already in 1993/4 but never attended lessons (nn.1, 2, 8, 10, 15, 17, 18). Others have such low attendance rates that we could hardly consider them as enrolled.

But the most important part of this research was the direct verification of the effective literacy competencies acquired.



The Municipality of Rome requests to NGO's who are in charge of the support to scholastic education of Roma children, to produce periodical reports with the official documentation concerning the number of effective attendances.

Unfortunately this method uses as an indicator the sole presence in the classroom and nothing reveals of the real children's school achievements. It should be necessary to verify instead the real competences acquired by these pupils and up to date (2009) no actions have been taken to use other indicators.

The use of sole quantitative data is failing to reveal the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling projects. If we base our opinion solely on numbers it is almost impossible to connect the number to a specific pupil, and this thwarted all the efforts made to discover the true level of children's educational progress.

The method I have used to verify the children's literacy levels was simple, and it was based on a test with pen and paper and a simple text in Italian to verify how many of them were effectively able to read and write. The results have been discouraging. Only 4 of the children were able to read and write correctly and even in those cases when the school attendances were constant, enormous difficulties remained. The rate of early school leavers remains very high, especially when we think that the encampment had 1200 presences and one third of this number was composed of people under 18.

In 1994 the Roma children of Casilina 700 enrolled at the schools "F. Cecconi" and "R. Pezzani" had the possibility of having the help of a support teacher, Mr. Domenico Forte, which had been dislocated to these schools. Mr. Forte on Saturdays offered a service of support for the young Roma that had learning difficulties or were in need of other forms of school support<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> During the school year 1997/98 Domenico Forte retired.

Like many other professionals who deals with Roma schooling, he stressed that structural difficulties are among the first causes that negatively influences the educational processes. Precarious and unhealthy living conditions, impossibility for the pupils to do their homework at home and lack of support are all factors that plays an important part in Roma's school failures.

During his interview, recorded in his classroom in 1994, he stated that:

‘... Well the improvement should consist first of all that they should have better living conditions and a healthier environment. Because I went last year to the encampment and I have to say for three nights after I could not sleep. I was shocked to see children sleeping on a pallet. It is a crime that they live in such conditions. First it is a crime to let them enter, (because when you do not have the possibility you do not let enter people), and it is a crime to let them live in such a condition that not even animals lives this way. And this of course has its effects on children's school results. At the encampment they should give them some prefabricated houses, and then maybe you could also work there. These poor things sometimes would like to carry some of their books or exercise books at home, and I understand this because it can also be positive for their parents, but it is impossible, because everything there is destroyed, burned or torn apart, because they live in the mud! Then, they should be here at eight thirty, and they do not, because first they need to be cleaned and dressed! ...<sup>39</sup>’

and continues:

‘... Then for what concerns the didactical aspect, well these children have enormous, neverending difficulties. Undescribable. And you can realise them only when you start to work with the children daily. And in fact last year, when I started this project, at a certain point I became discouraged, and I have asked myself ‘but who is condemning me to lose all these energies with this children?’ And why I asked myself this? Because I did not believe in the reality they were living. There are children here who are not even able to hold a pencil in their hands. All the necessary manual skills were lacking! But then I reconsidered, and did not leave. And I have to say I am very happy of this choice now. Happy and proud. Because when you look at them you already see the results. You see? They have already had their schooling at the behavioural level, they are self sufficient. Therefore from these results we can say that if our efforts

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Domenico Forte, 1994.

concentrates, and with our willingness, these pupils could end up as completely normal adolescents ...<sup>40</sup>.

And in spite of the objective difficulties here described it is impossible not to agree with the teacher Forte when he describes the improvements obtained. I had personally examined the exercise books of all the 22 Roma pupils enrolled at the school “F. Ceconi” and I can confirm the progresses made at that time.

However, although the results obtained are encouraging, they are still much too exiguous, especially when we consider that schooling has been the sole continuative intervention during all the years in which the encampment existed. In 2000, the year of the eviction, only five were the children able to write and read fluently.

The situation today has not changed much. In the year 2008 in the whole Rome there were only 20 Roma regularly attending high schools and only three of them obtained their high school final diploma<sup>41</sup>.

School actually remains a distant and abstract entity, whose role in child education is secondary when compared to other agencies such as family and the group of peers.

The reasons for what seems to be a mass escape from school has been often motivated with cultural reasons (Roma is an oral culture, like any other child of rural origin their families do not consider education as a value etc etc) but they should instead be attributed to the total impossibility for members of this group to have access to minimum citizenship rights.

Liégeois (1998a, 1998b) summarizing the experience of Roma children education in different European countries states that after ten years of the first EEC research on the

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Domenico Forte, 1994..

<sup>41</sup> Comune di Roma. **Scolarizzazione nomadi Anno Scolastico 2007-2008** [online]. These data are not anymore available on the Municipality's website but I have printed them when they were online. [www.comune.roma.it/repository/.../scheda%20rom%20a.s.%2007-08.doc](http://www.comune.roma.it/repository/.../scheda%20rom%20a.s.%2007-08.doc) [Accessed January 2007].

same topic the situation has not at all improved. It is very low the number of children enrolled and there has not been an increase in the enrollment when compared to the demographic growth of Roma population, this, always according to Liégeois happens because:

‘... what prevent the projects of education to interculture from being realized are not obstacles of educational or cultural nature but more often economical, political e social causes. ...’ ( Liégeois, 1998b).

To live in a hut with neither hot water nor electricity and without a place whereto concentrate and study peacefully surely presents enormous difficulties. In the hut it is impossible to preserve books and notebooks from being ripped or destroyed by smallest children. Another important factor is the request of school administrators that Roma children arrive at school clean and neat. During rainy days, the encampment became a swamp and the school bus had to stop at the entrance on via Casilina, therefore children had to cross the whole encampment to get on it and when they arrived they were covered in mud. Some of the schools had facilities like showers, but this meant that children should go to school one hour before lessons start. Other problems arose about who had the duty of doing these services because neither social workers nor the school support team had this task among their functions.

Giovanna Cometti, responsible for the schooling of Roma children for the VIIth District Council, explains which are in her opinion the reasons for which there are such great numbers of early school leavers among Roma:

‘... then when they are twelve years old, parents do not send them anymore to school, except for a minority of Roma parents who are particularly sensitive. At twelve, Roma girls are already looking after their younger brothers and sisters. In the morning, mothers go begging and the elder daughters must look after the family. If the pupil was not involved in school from an early age, it is difficult that he/she will

develop an interest or a motivation, and at twelve, they inevitably leave school ...<sup>42</sup>.

At the encampment Roma are well aware of all this, and with great efficaciousness Mr. Sejdo, expresses his point of view on the schooling at Casilino 700 in an interview recorded by me in 1994:

‘... and they come here asking that my children must be sent to school... so dirty, with no shoes, no clean garments, and how am I suppose to clean this mess? Before going to school, you should give work to parents! I have to earn some money to feed my children, and THEN, I will send my children in school. When I am unemployed, I do not send my children to school. Because I am ashamed that they go to school with Italians when they are dirty and the others are all clean and neat. Me, as a parent, as a father, how shall I enter that school? Look at me: I am not clean, I have not shaved, I am nothing, but when I was in my country, I did not look like a Gipsy. Because you are not born as a Gipsy, you become a Gipsy!

For example, you are clean and you are a beautiful lady, but if you will come to live here with us, you also will become a Gipsy! Like these homeless that you see in the streets, they are not Gipsy, but you see the state they are in? It is because they have nothing!

In winter, you have to wash yourself with cold water, and you get sick! And if you wash in winter with cold water you will die! Look at my children, it is too difficult to keep them clean! You see where she lives (indicates her youngest daughter sitting on the muddy ground), look at her shoes! Look at the mud everywhere! And I am supposed to be sending her to school in this condition? You know what I have said to a lady that was asking us to enroll our children in schools? I said to her come here, and make your school here in the encampment. Send your teachers here among us! My children were all going to school when we were in Yugoslavia ...<sup>43</sup>.

Of the same tone, the interview of Elio, a Montenegrin Roma:

‘... for what concern the school, they have to be practical. Carrying water and electricity first. When you do not have the possibility, how can you send your children to school? You need this, you need that, when they come out from the hut to reach the school bus, between all the mud of the encampment, they arrive at the school bus covered in mud and dirty! ...<sup>44</sup>.

And Mrs. Minka, more laconically:

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<sup>42</sup> Interview recorded in 1994.

<sup>43</sup> Interview Sejdo, winter 1994.

<sup>44</sup> Interview Elio, winter 1994.

‘...Eh but today Halida did not went to school because there are no clean dresses for her. How can I send her to school so dirty? ...’<sup>45</sup>.

From these considerations it should be easy to understand the problems that afflict Roma parents. The interviewed all pinpointed that the most important causes of Roma’s school failures are the economic precariousness and their harsh living conditions.

The last problem was the fact that in many cases of my knowledge either one or both parents had been subjected to expulsion proceedings. Necko, Senada and Svetlana parents for example, who were among the most promising pupils, all had an expulsion proceeding in progress and were therefore illegally present on the Italian territory although their children were requested to be enrolled in school.

As Senada and Svetlana’s father bitterly pointed out:

‘It was better if I were a thief! Only five years to wait and then I would have been clean! Now with this expulsion... somebody steals, does evil things, and after a certain period they can get a permit of stay. This problem of the expulsion is never ending!’<sup>46</sup>

The frequent displacement of Roma families from one city to the other or from one encampment to the other does not encourage the formation of steady relations among both teachers and the other pupils. As a direct consequence to this we have a fragmentation of the educational processes that makes them longer and much more difficult.

There is the risk of creating cultural hybrids whose school education does not reach the minimum needed level to guarantee their full access to the *Gadjos* world, creating social expectations that will always be disregarded if a change will not intervene to modify substantially the present conditions of poverty and social exclusion of this group.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview Minka, winter 1994.

<sup>46</sup> Personal communication recorded in my field notes by Sakib S. This statement refers to the fact that for minor crimes such as simple theft there are no prescriptions that prevents the offender to apply for a permit of stay after 5 years from the condemnation.

In spite of all this, for what concern the child, the motivation to go to school appears very strong, and those who are not enrolled, eyed jealously the others that were entering the School bus to go to their schools.

Among those who were enrolled and going to school regularly, there was a small group that I have followed more closely. Necko, Dzevad, Lepa, Senada, Svetlana, Daigor, Enes, Dzenita, Rubina, Raifa.

Often at the encampment, they would ask me to correct their homework or to help them to write or pronounce certain words.

A large part of my time in the field had been occupied in satisfying these requests, and more challenging ones such as: ‘Can you teach us all the English language?’ or: ‘When will you build a school here in the encampment?’. I did my best to satisfy the child needs and requests, and for three years I have managed to organize a small school in an abandoned hut at the encampment for any child that was interested in a school help.

One of the last of these self managed lessons before the eviction, took place in Bahra’s hut, but at the end Necko, his son, exclaimed: ‘But here it is impossible to concentrate!’, shouting among the cries of the youngest ones.

Nothwithstanding the difficulties of the situation the commitment and the desire for learning were enormous. I remember when they asked me to teach them an English song they had learned in school (“London Bridge is Falling Down”). We sang all together in the patio in front of Ramiz’s hut, and that day also Nena and Alka, who were not enrolled in school, came near and participate to the chorus. At the end, there were some forty children singing. Elvis, who was shy and proud and for all the past month was sitting apart, came close to me and gave me his name written on a small piece of plywood.

Of all the children named here, only Necko has continued to study, and even obtained a prize as one of the most promising Roma pupil, from Rome's former Mayor Walter Veltroni.

At the encampment it was impossible to concentrate and do homework. Books and school notebooks were kept in the classrooms armchair for fear that in the hut they could be destroyed by the youngest. For this reason, the time for school ends at the exit of the school itself and many young Roma who are part of the schooling projects generally affirms to be able to write but, when asked, they were able only to write down a few words. Surely the time dedicated to them is too little. At my question whether they should need a support teacher or not, Domenico Forte, support teacher at the schools "F. Pezzani" and "R. Cecconi", answered:

'When the teacher knows that there is a child with learning difficulties, as soon as she has little time, she dedicates it to him. If the child is in need of a particular intervention, in a bit of free time she dedicates to him. A differentiated work, we do this also with handicapped children and they regularly pass their exams. These children are not destined to become University professors!'

So, if the teacher has time, when she has a bit of free time, she offers support to Roma children. I wonder how much time must be left in a classroom composed of 20, 25 children. I think that the time for support, must be very short. When I have visited the "R. Pezzani" and "F. Cecconi" schools I noticed that Roma children were always positioned at the last desks, and that more often than not they would be sitting painting or drawing, instead of following the class progresses.

The lack of support professional personnel is not the only problem. many of the children stated that it is also difficult to buy the books which are necessary in secondary schools. The story of the three S. daughters below shows how different factors have influenced the future of these young Romni.



The younger sister Svetlana, in spite of the successes and the teacher's commitment, left school in spite of the family's and teacher's will.

Senada, the middle child, attended to the primary school and after a year of the second cycle she quit, together with two other boys who also attended the same school.

There are many factors which can have contributed to this. The most important is the difference between the educational models of the first five school years, in which there are only two teachers, to that of the second cycle, in which teachers are differentiated for each class. Problems of racism are also very worrying, especially in the inner cities where Roma encampments are normally located. Problems start to arise with the growth in the age of kids. In the primary schools the situation is tranquil enough, but in the secondary one, often other children's parents will oppose to the Roma presences in the classroom.

Senada was, during her first cycle of study, a very successful and promising student, but the changes from primary school to the secondary have been very traumatic to her, and the same has happened to the other two kids who were going to the same school.

In her interview she explains clearly the problems she experienced:

**Senada:** For my future.. I would like to be a princess, with a Blue prince.

**Monica:** Why you have not worked at the MSF project?

**Senada:** I didn't want to always go around and around, I did not have time, and what was I supposed to do there in school? Eight men and two women!

**Monica:** But you could have gone with Silvana...

**Senada:** Ah! Leave Silvana! She goes around with men and go, walks..

**Silvana:** I do not care about that!

**Senada:** There was one woman and ten men! What will I do there?

**Silvana:** What do you care about boys! You have to study for your future!

**Senada:** OK, also this is important, but I did not care, I already went to school, and there were a lot of girls there. But I did not want to go because I did not like it.

**Monica:** What was there that you did not like?

**Senada:** I did not like the teachers! They keep saying to me: Why you did not carry the book, or this, or that. But I could not buy them because I did not work and where was I supposed to take this money from? To buy books! And teacher said: 'You have to buy them', how can I buy them?

**Vera:** You know what my son Elvis says about that school where they take children? That you only have to sit! And Elvis says: I do not want to go into this school, and I said 'Why?', he told me: 'Because the teacher never makes me read, never makes me write, she only tells me to sit. To the other children, she gives homework, but to me, I only have to sit'.

**Senada:** Elvis is right. He wants to write, to talk, to read, but teachers only make you paint dolls.

I liked the primary school, it was different. There were good boys and girls, I played basket and run around. Teachers were calling you by name, asking me if they could take me home. But I have always said: 'No do not worry, the school bus will take me home', and then they kissed me.

Then we played: it was a game with a bottle, and you make it spin, and when it stops the person must kiss or give a caresse to somebody else..

**Monica:** And what you do now with your time? Aren't you bored?

**Senada:** Yes, sometimes I am, but here I help to do something.

**Monica:** How do you imagine your future?

**Senada:** I would like a job, to be like the Italian girls. Maybe when I grow up I will find one. I often dream of being a model or a singer. I do not know how to sing, but I have tried in Italian, our songs... I cannot succeed.

**Monica:** Why, in your opinion which is the difference between Roma and Gadjos?

**Senada:** Ahhh! There are no differences, only that they live in houses and work and we are in this hut, with cold.

Senada acutely noticed the tragic condition of Roma children enrolled in schools. She described Elvis's situation showing a classroom with only one teacher, who must decide whether to follow his classroom or either stop to include the little Elvis and to help him filling his gaps. But this last choice would mean that a whole classroom should wait for only one pupil. The solution is that of leaving the children in school and make him sit (*'...only I have to sit!'*) while *'He wants to write, to talk, to read, but teachers only make you paint dolls'*.

It is evident the disappointment and the delusion in the lack of cares, experienced by Elvis and Senada. In the interview she also adds that the differences in the relationship with the teachers encountered in secondary school were the main reason for differing her studies.

In conclusion we can say that Roma schooling projects, in spite of all institutional efforts, are lacking in both systematicity and effectiveness. Lack of qualified personnel, superficiality of the local governments' control on an intervention which the institution itself finances, coupled with the unsolved questions of the encampments and of Roma living conditions have seriously undermined the project's success.

All these factors are concurring in making these projects only an emergency plugging. It seems that the underlying worrying is that of removing begging children from the streets, rather than offering them a real chance for literacy and integration.

These aspects will be discussed more detailedly in the next chapters, where we will also see what happened to the Casilino 700 inhabitants, during and after the encampment's eviction.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### TOWARD ROMA'S BLACK JUBILEE<sup>1</sup>

#### 8.1 Introduction

This paragraph is dedicated to another aspect of the relation between Roma and institutions, the one related to activities of control and repression.

In this first part I will introduce the theme of deviance and criminality among Roma, with general data and two cases excerpted from my fieldwork. The second part will describe the Police activities toward the encampment of Casilino, and that ended up with its complete eviction and destruction in the summer of 2000.

Cesare Lombroso<sup>2</sup> was the first to speak systematically of the “natural propensity for crime” amongst the Roma, whom he labelled on the principles of his newly founded phrenology, as biological criminals, thieves and liars, violent by nature and therefore irredeemable.

Phrenology disappeared completely from the scientific world and its ideas and theories can no longer be propounded, but the idea of a Roma “inborn” deviance is quite widespread among part of the population, including some of those who hold institutional positions<sup>3</sup>. This process of negative labelling is very important, and must be

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<sup>1</sup> The expression “Black Jubilee” is a quotation from the book title of the Italian photographer Tano D'Amico on the last year of life and on the destruction of the Casilino 700 encampment (see Bibliography). As we will see further on in this Chapter, the year 2000 was particularly tragic for the Roma of the encampment, where three children died in different occasions. The use of the term “black” (the colour of mourning) is opposed to the whiteness of the Catholic Jubilee which took place in the same year.

<sup>2</sup> Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909), criminologist, founder of the Italian School of Positivist Criminology. Stated that criminality was inherited and to support his hypothesis used a biological determinism based on physiognomy and phrenology.

<sup>3</sup> During the television programme “Porta a porta” broadcasted on RAI 1 in the winter of 1998, the Mayor of Rome actually expressed his belief that Roma live for the most part by illegal activities. The same

taken into account when we deal with issues related to Roma because it is on the base of this belief that often statutory bodies acts. The most evident example of this labelling process is visible in Roma's living conditions.

Exclusion made from the self built shanty towns, the system of the encampments for Roma was implemented by statutory bodies during the 1980's<sup>4</sup>, when many Italian Regions institutionalised the encampments wrongly assuming that all Roma were nomads and that for this reason finds themselves more at ease in camps than in houses<sup>5</sup>. In this way for more than 40 years Roma have been forced to live apart and differently from any other human group, in peripheral, degraded dwellings whose location and state of neglect turned them into real places of segregation.

Conditions such as that of Casilino 700, provide the basis for a concentration of marginalisations that in the long run becomes practically irreversible due to the actual lack of viable alternatives.

In the camps, as in other decayed areas of the city which cannot be defined as ethnic, social discomfort manifests itself in the same forms it takes in the suburbs: anomie, deviance and drug addiction. Young Roma have the same problems of their Roman peers of the underclasses: social exclusion and unemployment, with the aggravating circumstance that being Roma (and therefore "foreigners") they cannot even rely on that local network of family connections and friends that could enable them to enter the labour market through these nets.

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belief was expressed to me at the encampment by the Deputy for Social Affairs Amedeo Piva, that at the time was in charge of social emergencies on behalf of the Municipality (see also note 30 in this chapter).

<sup>4</sup> See in Bibliography the list of Regional Laws directed toward Roma.

<sup>5</sup> The ambiguity in denominations is visible in many official documents where Roma are alternatively named: "Nomads", "Roma", "Gipsy (*Zingari*)".

Furthermore, unlike their Italian peers, they do not have a family that can at least ensure an emergency income sufficient in order to satisfy their basic needs. It is evident that for some of the young Roma petty crime represents the sole possibility of survival.

At this point, if action is not taken in time, the risk is not that of creating a group that is “prone to crime” as Cesare Lombroso believed, but condemned to crime.

## 8.2 The unwanted: Roma between control and repression.

Foreigners as a whole, accounts for a third of the prisons population. In 2001 they were 16.330 on a total of 55.338. The table below shows the incidence of the first eight nationalities, divided for gender and country of origin, presents in our state prisons.

*Tab. 8.1.: Italy. First eight foreign countries for number of convicted in Italian penitentiaries (2001).*

Country of origin (Males)	Total	%	Country of origin (Females)	Total	%
1. Morocco	3.563	22	1. Fr. Yugoslavia	158	16
2. Albania	2.704	16	2. Colombia	154	15
3. Tunisia	2.056	12	3. Nigeria	137	14
4. Algeria	1.468	9	4. Romania	57	6
5. Fr. Yugoslavia	1.311	8	5. Albania	51	5
6. Romania	696	4	6. Brasil	45	4
7. Colombia	573	3	7. Ecuador	39	4
8. Nigeria	526	3	8. Tunisia	26	3

Source: ISTAT (2003).

The countries from Italy’s immediate periphery occupies the first places, and out of these, the ones arriving from the Maghreb and the Balkanic area. People belonging to Roma group constitute a part of the national prisons population, but their number is almost impossible to determine with certainty due to the fact that Italian statistics do not consider the ethnic group but the sole nationality. For this reason they would be registered only on the base of their country of origin.

In spite of this lack of data, both my fieldwork and my professional experience unfortunately confirm that this minority is subjected to frequent interactions with the repressive and control institutions. Another indirect confirmation of this data comes from the attention given to the theme of Roma and penal issues from scholars and professionals such as magistrates and lawyers<sup>6</sup>.

Once they have entered our penal system, both foreigners and Roma are subjected to severe forms of discrimination. I do not intend to analyse in-depth the issues related to foreigners conditions in the Italian state prisons. This topic would request a specific study which is not the object of this dissertation, but I will describe here the most frequent and serious problems that these persons have to face.

The first problem to arise concerns their legal assistance. The counsel appointed by the Court is assigned on the base of a certified income, which for a Roma is often impossible to demonstrate, therefore they have to resort to a private professional. Then there is the problem of the certified residence, without which it is impossible to avail oneself with the house arrest (like in the case of minor offences) and for this reason they often stay in jail while their Italian peers serves for the same crime their sentences at home. Few are also the ones who are able to receive visiting relatives, especially wives or husbands, because due to the fact that their marriages are *de facto*, they cannot be used as the officially registered ones for what concerns the visits authorizations<sup>7</sup>. Even phone calls are difficult to be made, firstly because the only company allowed is the

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<sup>6</sup> Exemplar in this sense is the work of the NGO Antigone, created by academics, magistrates and other professionals from the legal professions. This Association has printed numerous Reports and Surveys on the themes of crime and punishment. Another indicator of the consistence of Roma presences in our prisons, is given by the fact that even the ISTAT (the Italian National Institute for Statistics, in his 2003 Report on foreigners in Italian prisons (see Bibliography), used the term “nomads” (an ethnic definition), although the Italian statistic system does not collect data based on ethnic group (see Tab. 8.1 and Tab. 8.2).

<sup>7</sup> The law also includes the cohabitants, and not only regularly married individuals, but many Roma are not aware that they could make use of this possibility.

Italian Telecom, normally very expensive, and secondly, because of the bureaucratic difficulties when is necessary to verify the receiver's phone number. Also, Magistrates often requests for the foreigner's phone calls a listener and a translation, and the interpreter is sometimes difficult to find at the time when the call should be made.

All these elements should already make clear the problems that Roma inmates must face when dealing with the Italian penal system.

### 8.2.1 Juveniles and the penal system

The percentage of Roma in juvenile prisons is very high, particularly if we compare it to the data concerning Italians. For minor offences such as theft, the latter generally benefit from measures alternative to prison, whereas this is almost impossible for the Roma, even if charged with minor counts as theft, pickpocketing or receiving.

In this table are reported the number of minor denounced according to their nationality and age classes compared to their Italian peers.

*Tab. 8.2: Italy. Minors indicted for class ages and country of origin (2001)*

<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>&lt; 14</b>	<b>14 - 17</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Italy	4.466	25.599	31.065
2. Albania	81	1.157	1.238
3. Romania	250	934	1.184
4. Yugoslavian Fed.	1.121	960	2.081
5. Croatia	285	248	533
6. Slovenia	13	19	32
7. Bosnia Herzegovina	89	111	200
8. Algeria	69	400	469
9. Morocco	155	1.551	1.706
Others	136	1.141	1.277
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6.665</b>	<b>33.120</b>	<b>39.785</b>

Source: ISTAT (2003).

Although the national underage criminality still represents the largest part of statistics, the number of foreigners is constantly increasing. As visible, it is considerable the



number of those coming from the Balkanic area and former Yugoslavia which together represents the largest part among the foreigners.

Actually Roma minors are part of the large number of those who are been punished by being sentenced to correctional institutions instead of addressing them toward alternative measures such as assessment centers. This attitude toward punishment rather than reintegration has been somehow “justified” with the fact that very often the Roma minors escapes from these institutes and on the fact that to undertake a process of reintegration it is necessary to have the full support and agreement with the family of origin, and often Roma families are considered as non reliable under this aspect.

This happens especially in the case of female under age Roma, whose most frequent crime reported is that of breaking and entering ending with theft, or pickpocketing (ISTAT, 2003, p. 92).

All the crimes described are strictly related to poverty, and this confirms the vision of correctional facilities as a *social dumping ground*, the place where unsolved problems that should have been solved elsewhere, are collected. As Naldi points out: ‘... Italian prisons are not filled with important criminals guilty of serious offences, but for the largest part, of extremely marginal sectors of the population, for whom petty crime represents an expression of social problems that would be worth of other, deeper answers’ (Naldi, 2001, p. 17). The profile of these persons can be described as often young, with a low degree of education, who never had any stable occupation and often deprived of familiar and social ties that could be used as a support under difficult situation. For them deviant careers represents a way of survival, and the expression of a social disease that should be confronted with different instruments and attitudes other than only that of repression.

Also, in the last years the public opinion has expressed a strong request for urban security and the kind of crime that Roma undertake, like the theft in apartments, touches many sector of the local population. This leads to increasing support for an idea of social security based on penal responses instead than on integration practices and projects.

In the following tables it is shown the number of under aged who had access to alternative measures to detention, like the placement in rehabilitation community. Surprisingly for Italian statistics, this time Roma are indicated explicitly, although inadequately, as “nomads”<sup>8</sup> :

*Tab. 8.3.: Italy. Assignments to Rehabilitation Communities of minors undergoing penal proceedings according to age class, gender and nationality. (2001)*

<b>Age Classes</b>			<b>Nomads</b>		<b>Foreigners</b>	
	<b>MF</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>MF</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>MF</b>
< 14	5	2	2	2	3	-
14 - 15	215	34	45	25	62	4
16 - 17	897	67	53	15	297	21
18 and more	222	14	14	7	59	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	1.339	117	114	49	421	26

Source: ISTAT (2003).

As visible, the accesses to alternative measures of detention is very small for Roma, due to the problems that I have already described above for what concern the adults and to the fact that the number of these rehabilitation communities is very low and all are suffering from severe overcrowding.

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<sup>8</sup> See on this behalf also the note 4 in this chapter.

In my decennial experience among Roma community I have knowledge of only one case of a young Roma from a camp in the northern part of Rome, who has been lodged in a centre<sup>9</sup>, though such cases are extremely rare.

The young Roma served his sentence in the centre, but two days after his release he was taken back to Casal del Marmo for a second theft. In fact, until concrete integration opportunities are provided it is very difficult for this vicious circle to be interrupted.

### **8.2.2 Drugs and other forms of addiction**

However, deviance is not the only form of anomie menacing the encampments nor the most serious. Other important problems are those connected with the use of hard and psychotropic drugs, a use which has gradually become more and more widespread in the Roman camps and which, though to a smaller degree, was present also in Casilino 700. The increase among “nomads” of drug dealing and addiction cases has been registered also by the 2003 ISTAT Report (ISTAT, 2003, p.119).

In my personal experience, during the camp’s last years of existence, there were among the Bosnians at least three boys who were heroin addicts.

Hardly ever do they benefit from the SERT services (Drug Addiction Services), which anyway are confined to low threshold intervention (the administration of methadone). Consequently, the only possible solution left is a therapeutic community, among which, however, it is very difficult to find one willing to accommodate a Roma (ISTAT, 2003, p.112).

In one case, the parents of a young Roma drug addict that I knew for years from the encampment, at a loss and confused by a condition they had no knowledge of, asked the

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<sup>9</sup> “Borgo Amigò”, a residential home for minors held in detention who benefit from measures alternative to prison, directed by Padre Gaetano, Chaplain of the Juvenile Correctional Institute of Casal del Marmo.

institutions for help. The only possible intervention in such cases is that of submitting a request that the parental authority be entrusted to the mayor so that the Municipality may pay the fee of the therapeutic community. This is due to the fact that therapeutic communities prefer to be entrusted with cases of persons who can count on a family to support them; for this reason the family decided to begin a foster care procedure.

However, the foster care procedure is lengthy and in the meantime the prison term could expire, which would make it very difficult to reach the young person for a subsequent intervention. In the meanwhile the boy had already made an attempt to escape from prison in order to obtain heroin, thus adding jailbreak to the previous offences.

After days and weeks of useless attempts to gain him access into one of the regional rehabilitation communities, the parents of the boy asked that he be kept in the juvenile prison of Casal del Marmo as long as possible to avoid the risk of finding him one day dead in his shack. At the camp the behaviour of the boy was considered unacceptable: zigzag races with stolen cars that were then abandoned or burnt in the camp and thefts in the shacks. Many also believed that he was a Police informer.

In 1996, his father V. had tried to stop him by tying him up in the shack, and was for this reason arrested for ill-treatment. The story was covered by the press and some of the heads of family of the camp wrote an open letter to defend the father and explain what had happened<sup>10</sup>.

On that occasion, perhaps, it would have been possible to intervene, but neither the social services nor the NGO's were able to help this man.

His eldest son had been killed by the Police as soon as he had arrived in Italy for not stopping while driving a stolen car. From then on V. began drinking and despaired of

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<sup>10</sup> Senise, L. (1997) Centocelle: viaggio nel cuore rom. **Il Giornale di Roma** Cronaca di Roma, 11 Sep. p.5.

his sons whom he had succeeded in bringing to safety from a destroyed Sarajevo, but whom he had not been able to save from heroin, nor from a tragic and unjustifiable death.

The drug addiction issue among the Roma population, became a problem of great consistence in the decade 1990-2000, and it has been drawn finally to the attention of the Municipality of Rome. To combat the spread of this phenomenon in the year 2000 was implemented a project in collaboration with many different non-profit organisations<sup>11</sup>. This project was dedicated to Roma population and consisting in the reaching of Roma with drug addiction problems through an intervention carried out with the technique of the outreach work. The project, which was called “Gipsy 2000, Tossicodipendenze e Nomadi” (Gipsy 2000, Drug Addiction and Nomadic Peoples), started in September 1999 and lasted until December with the aim of putting in practice both addiction contrast action, dissemination of informative material and, where possible, to entrust the subjects contacted to local Drug Addiction Services. The project was then repeated the following year from March to August and later in 2002. During the months in which the social workers were at work, 352 Roma, of whom 134 confirmed addicts, were contacted and assisted either for informations or for help in being addressed to the local SERT (Drug Addiction Services).

In spite of its evident usefulness, this project has not been repeated and ended in 2008 due to lack of new fundings.

Besides, these kinds of projects are directed mainly toward heroine and cocaine addicts or ecstasy users, and they do not deal with all the other forms of atypical addictions who are menacing the general health conditions of the encampment’s population.

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<sup>11</sup> PARSEC, Opera Nomadi, Casa dei Diritti Sociali (CDS) and Fondazione Villa Maraini.

A case of these less visible addictions is the one I have registered during my fieldwork among Romani women, and concerning their use of antidepressants and hypnotics medicaments. These treatments were all self administered and sometimes the medicines were even mixed together. The incidence of this phenomenon is according to me very worrying and it calls for immediate action on behalf of the ASL (the Health local authorities), but at present time there are no available systematic data on this issue. There is therefore an urgent need for further specific research on this theme.

### **8.3 Police control at the encampment**

In these pages I have shown how Roma as a specific ethnic group are menaced by different forms of social anomie, like in the cases of deviance and criminality issues. In this part I will describe the practices of control enacted by statutory bodies not in the exceptional context of a prison or of another correctional facility, but at the encampment itself, where Roma and their families live.

For what concern Casilino 700, in addition to the Polizia di Stato and to the Carabinieri, another Police corp, the VII Gruppo Vigili Urbani (VIIth Group of Traffic Wardens), was active in the camp for years with its outcast-relief squad, the NAE – Nucleo Assistenza Emarginati (Emarginates Assistance Squad)<sup>12</sup>.

In the VIIth District the NAE team was made up of seven officers who deal with all the above-mentioned emergencies. Their work at the camp of via Casilina 700 (and in the other camps of the district) has been a good example of intervention with the Roma community.

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<sup>12</sup> For an explication of NAE's officers' duties see par. 3.5.2 note 20.

During the years the camp was in existence, these officers had been able to establish a very special relationship with the encampment population, in spite of the fact that they also carried out patrol and control actions (traffic wardens in fact also perform investigative Police duties). Strange as it can seem, they were the representatives of the only institution that the Roma trusted. They had succeeded in gaining the community's confidence and trust, often acting as mediators between the Roma and other sectors of the institutions. Thus they became a point of reference for the encampment population, for many different problems and emergencies. These include a wide range of duties ranging from obtaining a new *kampina* (camping van) to legal advice, covering nearly all the possible fields of interventions, but the team suffered from chronic lack of personnel, and could not possibly deal with all the social emergencies arising in the VIIth District.

Apart from the NAE, the two corps principally in charge of keeping watch over the camps are the Police and the Carabinieri. They were responsible for carrying out both prevention and repression activities, but in practice the latter occupied much more time than the former. The encampment of Casilino 700 never had any permanent control station, therefore it constituted a large, uncontrolled territory, where any criminal activity would be possible. This lack of control on such a large area allowed some of the inhabitants to establish and practice different illegal activities like the trade of stolen goods and cars, and heroin and drugs dealing. Italians also made their contribution to this situation by being the acquirers of both drugs and stolen goods, especially in the case of cars and car parts. The encampment in fact, was located close to via Palmiro Togliatti, a Roman road famous for his numerous car junkyards, who often became the buyers for the stolen materials.

Another violation was that of using the encampment as an illegal discharge for building materials (in order to avoid the payment of the Municipal tax for special waste).

During fieldwork both me and Professor Roberto De Angelis pressed the local authorities for a permanent patrol station at the two camp's entrances in order to contain the criminal actions and to protect the majority of the population who were honestly earning their small salaries with the recycling activities, but the post had never been established.

For these reasons, Police operations consisted mostly of surprise inspections.

In fact, the Roma of the Roman encampments have learned during these years to rely on a well-established defensive strategy which consists in abandoning the camp to go and stay with their relatives in other settlements and at times even in other cities or countries.

As a matter of fact this kind of inspection, which generally takes place over a vast area, is planned above all to coincide with relocations and evictions.

In this way they could reduce the number of people to be relocated, purging all those who were either irregular, or had a criminal record<sup>13</sup>. In the Casilino 700 encampment this practice was carried out systematically, being the easier and the less problematic. Due also to a press campaign during the nine years of life of the encampment the police had periodically directed their attention toward the Casilino 700 *favela*, as it was nicknamed by journalists<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> I will discuss this important point further on, for now suffice it to say that on the base of the Municipality council Ordinance n.80, which states that any Roma having a criminal record cannot be granted access to the authorized encampments.

<sup>14</sup> In Bibliography are reported numerous press articles who are evidence of this attention.



Among the possible examples are the relocation of part of the shacks in the summer of 1996 and the preparations for the eviction of the summer of 1999, which brought about a considerable intensification of repression actions in the camp.

The first eviction of the area was carried out on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1996. The result was that the camp retreated and its entrance moved backwards from via di Casilina to via di Centocelle. The relocation of the camp had been decided so as to enable the enclosure and the subsequent excavations that were to bring to light the Roman ruins found in the airport area, which in the meantime had been designated to become an archaeological park.

The operation was conducted with such a deployment of forces that it was clear it was meant to serve as a deterrent. The following were employed: two vehicles of the Carabinieri coming from Naples, four vehicles of the Reparto Mobile (the Flying Squad Unit), a horse box with its horses and their respective riders of the Polizia Stradale (the road Police), two SUV cars of the Reparto Mobile and a helicopter, as well as other Police Officers from the Police Station of Centocelle.

After the eviction of the first part of the area and the pulling down of the shacks, the municipality gave one or two caravans to each family whose shack had been destroyed. After this, however, the camp was once again completely forgotten by the institutions.

This period of relative calm lasted until July 1997, when a whole series of combing operations was conducted especially against the Romanian and Bosnian groups.

In the Summer of 1997 the volunteers of the “Associazione Anthropolos” and “Rete Territoriale di Roma Sud”, who had been working at the camp for a long time, were informed both by the USI (Special Office for Immigration) and the NAE that in order to

continue with the archaeological excavations, the camp had to be moved further backwards, with the consequent need to relocate a dozen shacks.

In order to co-ordinate this further narrowing of the area with the Roma, a meeting was organised at the camp with the heads of families, the volunteers, the NAE and USI with maps ready at hand to decide the relocation together with the parties concerned, so as to give them the time to build a new shack or avail themselves of the opportunity to receive a caravan from the municipality. This was done in order to enable them to choose the most satisfactory position on the basis of the relations between the families of the camp.

*Picture 8.1: The meeting at the encampment among the Roma, volunteers of the Anthropos NGO, members of the Special Office for Immigration and the NAE. August 1997.*



Source: Photo by the Author.

A week after this meeting, during which a mutual agreement among camp dwellers and institutions had been reached, I received an alarmed telephone call from the camp

asking me to go there immediately because there was a Police inspection. The Police, together with the bulldozers of the Municipality, were going ahead with the eviction and demolition of the huts.

Entire families, with women and children of all ages, were made to stand for hours under the sun while their poor houses were being destroyed before their eyes, without anyone having taken the necessary steps to provide them with a new place to live before proceeding with the demolitions (D'Amico, 2000; Montesi, 2000).

This operation was conducted by superintendent Pianese and the head of the Police Station of via dei Gelsi in absolute autonomy. Neither the USI nor the NAE had been informed.

Soon after this, a whole series of systematic and daily inspections was carried out in the part of the camp occupied by the Romanians, the group with the fewer rights since they were never in the position to benefit from the refugee law dedicated to Bosnians (L.390/1992), thanks to which some of the Roma had been able to regularise their position.

Besides, at the time when these events occurred, Romania was not a member of the EU and Romanian citizens were to be considered as any other non-Schengen foreigner.

The status of Romanian Roma was at the time very peculiar and if possible, worse than that, already tragic, to which were subjected Bosnians and other former Yugoslavian citizens.

Those evicted included former *asylanten* (asylum seekers) already rejected by Germany, which had refused to grant their request on the basis of the existing agreements between Romania and Germany<sup>15</sup>, they had found shelter in Italy, even though they never had

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<sup>15</sup> The reference is to the treaty agreed between Germany and Romania in September 1992 for the return of stateless, former Romanian citizens, most of all of Roma ethnic origin.

any possibility of regularising their position. At the time of this first eviction, only six out of three hundred had a permit of stay, they were certainly those in the weakest position.

In spite of the fact that in their country their lives were in danger, as they were victims of the violent attacks of neo-Nazi extremists, the Romanians have been among those who have experienced the greater difficulties in regularising their position (of course this was the situation before the Romanian entering into the European Union).

In fact, according to the Italian law on the right of sanctuary, one cannot be recognised as an asylum seeker unless one demonstrates that in one's own country a *personal persecution towards a specific person*, and not an entire ethnic group, is taking place. This made it very difficult for the Romanies to be recognised as refugees, and even in the case that their ethnic origin could be of any help, it must be remembered that for the Italian state, Roma are not recognised as an official minority.

Several international organisations, among which the European Roma Rights Centre, have documented the acts of violence against the Romanian Roma (ERRC Report, 1996).

Such documentation, however, has never been recognised officially by the immigration countries, which on the contrary have continued with the deportations, as in the case of Germany and Italy.

The inspections, which had begun in the summer, continued regularly for the whole winter obtaining the desired effect. The camp, as it was hoped, was "relieved" of the presence of the Romanians and of many Bosnian families who having no permit of stay,

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See also: (1992) Germania and Romania in deportation pact. **New York Times**, 25 Sep. [online]. Available from: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE2DA1138F936A1575AC0A964958260>. [Accessed June 2006].

eloped away seeking shelter either in other cities or in other encampments of the Capital. As a result, in 1998 there were 200 persons (about 50 family units) as against the 650 persons of 1995.

The following winter many families returned to Casilino 700. The encampment had a period of relative peace, even if the policy of surprise inspections continued for the whole year, as documented by the many ERRC Reports dedicated to the Italian situation (ERRC Report, 2000a, 2000b).

Then, in March 2000 (ERRC Report, 2000b), about twenty people were transferred to the centre of Ponte Galeria<sup>16</sup> waiting to be repatriated, as they were considered as irregulars, in spite of the fact that many were born in Italy. Following here is an excerpt from the ERRC Report about the events of that day:

‘According to the Italian non-governmental organisation ARCI, 19-year-old Ms Behara Omerović was deported to Bosnia despite being in her fifth month of pregnancy. She was deported with her daughter Magdalena, who was born in Rome in February 1999. Sixteen-year-old Sanela Sejdović was also deported with her infant daughter Shelly Hrustić, born mid-February 2000. Fourteen-year-old Serbo Hrustić, who was born in France, was expelled with his grandmother. For the last three seasons, Serbo has played for a local soccer team at Spinaceto, an area close to the camp, and he became a card-carrying player for the Fiamme Gialle athletic team in January 2000. He was extremely proud of the document - it was his first “official” one. On the night of March 3, according to eyewitnesses, when the Police raided the camp, he showed his soccer card as identification. An officer reportedly tore the card up and slapped him. Serbo reportedly does not speak Bosnian. Another boy, Mirsad O., was separated from his mother when Police refused to believe that the woman with whom he was taken away was his aunt. Mirsad O., 15 years old, was deported to Bosnia in his pyjamas. His mother, Devleta O., is still in Italy’. (ERRC Report, 2000b, p. 54).

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<sup>16</sup> Ponte Galeria is a suburban administrative area of the Municipality of Rome where is placed one of the 14 Italian CPT (Centri Permanenza Temporanea – Temporary Centres for Foreigners), renamed CIE (Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione – Centre for Identification and Expulsion) after the law L. 125/2008 (DL 92/2008 Art.9), are structures where are hosted foreigners who had been object of an expulsion proceeding. The permanence in these centres can last up to 6 months.

These words with which the ERRC describes the events, are probably the best introduction to the last section of this chapter, that deals with what became known as “Roma’s black Jubilee”, i.e. the events that regarded the last year of life of the encampment.

#### **8.4. Epilogue: Roma’s black Jubilee**

This paragraph is dedicated to the events which have led to the destruction of the Casilino 700 and to the eviction of its inhabitants.

The facts that I am going to describe here, the techniques employed and the whole institutional behaviour and strategy toward this encampment do not constitute an isolated case and have rather configured as a model of intervention.

Taken altogether, they show with evident clarity all the omissions, the perpetual indecisiveness, the lack of any visible sign of planning and the generalised superficiality and improvisation that have characterised the institutional actions toward the Roma.

Let us therefore enter into the chain of events that eventually led to the year of Roma’s black Jubilee. The year of the last, definitive diaspora that provoked, as will be shown further, a tragic epilogue.

The measures and the actions undertaken by the Municipal and local authorities of the VIIth District here reported, concern the whole span of the encampment’s life and they cover a period ranging from 1994 to the eviction day in the summer of year 2000.

I have participated in all the public reunions and open District Councils concerning the encampment. I have interviewed, as privileged witnesses District clerks and politicians

who were at the time elected in the Municipal Council, including the Municipal Presidents<sup>17</sup>.

During the years when the encampment existed, the VIIth District had under its direct jurisdiction also other four Roma encampments, named after the streets where they had been placed. There were via Casilina 700 and 900 (later destroyed in February 2010), via di Centocelle 98 and lastly, the one occupied by a small Kanjaria group in via Dameta.

In July 1994 the VIIth District Council approved unanimously a resolution, that demanded the evacuation of all the Roma encampments in the area, while asking at the same time for the renewal and arrangement of the old Casilino 900.

The evacuation became necessary because:

‘... The Council believes that the installation of another Roma encampment on the urban conglomerate of the VIIth District could create such a violent impact with the residing population ... and it will seriously undermine a civil coexistence with the same Nomads ...’<sup>18</sup>.

Following this Resolution came the convocation of a conjunct District Council between the VIth and the VIIth Districts. The then Assessor to Social Policies Amedeo Piva also participated to this enlarged Council that was open also to citizens.

The result of this meeting had been the confirmation of the decision already taken concerning the evacuation of the Casilino 700 encampment, that should have happened around March - April of 1994. I also was present at this meeting, and the main theme was basically that the number of Roma in the area was too high<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> The VIIth District had as President first Giovanni Giovannetti (from the right-wing party *Forza Italia*, now PdL), and subsequently Pino Battaglia (from the left-wing party *Democratici di Sinistra* (now *Partito Democratico*). Emblematically, there have been no differences between the two administrations in the policies enacted toward Roma in general and Casilino 700 in particular.

<sup>18</sup> Resolution n.61, 25/07/1994 of the VIIth District Council.

<sup>19</sup> It must be said that at the time the Roma population in Rome was around 5.000 in all. The encampment at its birth, in winter 1992, was composed of only 200 persons, but the lack of control and the general

This belief was shared by both Presidents of the two Districts involved, in spite of their different political affiliation<sup>20</sup>. During the same meeting, a Councillor from the right wing party Alleanza Nazionale, even suggested to a small group of ladies also present, to interrupt with slogans and whistles when the word “refugee” was mentioned<sup>21</sup>. ‘Refugee or not refugees, they are always Gypsies and we do not want them here’, he added.

In other interviews with Municipal Councillors belonging to opposite political parties, the Councillors demonstrated their prejudices and the total ignorance of the issues regarding Roma, especially for what concerned their assumed “nomadic” attitudes. In the numerous meetings I have attended during my fieldwork, I have gathered personal communications from different Councillors, all stating that “nomads” should be “true” nomads, and that therefore they should not stop and settle down anywhere, but should instead be travelling and constantly moving, adding that this part of their supposed cultural heritage should be supported and encouraged.

‘... Always moving. I move from the premise that the word “nomad” means “to pass”, to stop for some days and then go away. Because this is the meaning or not? The only solution to the problems of integration is in the continuous displacement, and this part of their culture ought to be incremented because it is fundamental, extremely important under this aspect. Because nomads mean that they must walk, they cannot have a steady place for all their life taking advantage of everything! ...’<sup>22</sup>.

This position is based on a prejudice that became an indicator of the hatred and opposition to which the Roma group as a whole has been subjected. It was obvious that

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neglect, allowed the uncontrolled growth in numbers of people, that reached its peak in the year 2000, when the encampment’s population as a whole had been estimated around 1200 persons.

<sup>20</sup> Vincenzo Puro, President of the VIth District (Democratic Party) and Giovanni Giovannetti, President of the VIIth District (Forza Italia, now PdL), were, during this reunion, completely agreeing with each other.

<sup>21</sup> I was present at the meeting and being mistaken for an Alleanza Nazionale supporter was asked to protest by the same Councillor.

<sup>22</sup> Interview to the Alleanza Nazionale Councillor of the VIIth District, 1994.



no rational project could be produced under the auspices of an Administration that ignores completely the nature of the phenomenon they were dealing with.

The then President of the VIIth District, Giovanni Giovannetti (Forza Italia, now PdL), declared to me in an interview:

‘... and so we have a presence here, that I can estimate with a very small margin of error, that should be around three thousand people on Casilino 700, because that is a very large encampment’<sup>23</sup>.

A statement easy to refute. The number of Bosnian Roma in Casilino 700 was at the time (1994), of 400 persons, and if we include also Moroccans, Romanians and Montenegrin Roma we can postulate a number of circa 700 persons altogether. The data relative to this census were also easy to obtain since the forms had been compiled by Officers of the VIIth NAE group, the District Social Services and the Municipality of Rome’s Special Office for Immigration. Besides, his concentration had been made possible by the lack of any kind of control in the encampment’s area and by the systematic postponing and underestimation of this emergency.

At my question about how is it possible that so many people coming from war areas had not been registered as Refugees he answered:

‘... One of the biggest problems is in fact this: many of them should be entitled to be registered and welcomed as war refugees, and this would mean to have access to assistance and help, but many of them are delinquent, and they refuse to be registered in the census. And if they would apply for political asylum, well they are scared, because when they would go back to their countries they would be considered as people who renegade their own country. This is the paramount reason for which they refuse to be registered in the census. A large part of the population escapes the controls in order not to be considered as a traitor and a coward ...’<sup>24</sup>.

I have witnessed quite the opposite phenomenon, because during August 1994, when the first NAE - Special Office for Immigration census was issued, the Roma were eager

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<sup>23</sup> Interview to Giovanni Giovannetti, President of the VIIth District 1994.

<sup>24</sup> Interview to Giovanni Giovannetti, President of the VIIth District 1994.

to be registered, because they believed that 'being written in the Municipality papers' could have provoked some amelioration of their life conditions.

As I have showed here elsewhere instead, regardless their places of origin none of the Casilino 700 inhabitants has ever been granted the refugee status.

On the few permits of stay issued to Bosnians it was indicated that the reason for their presence here was due to humanitarian reason, but this alone did not entitle the owner to anything. As explained in the following interview's excerpt with Roberto Vallocchia, the social worker that at that time was in charge of the Crna-Gora Roma group, on behalf of the Opera Nomadi:

'... These people should be included in the protection granted to refugees from former Yugoslavia from our law (L.390/92), but the terms of the problems are this: in the refugee lists could be included only the Bosnians, and neither the Serbian and Montenegrins nor the Romanians (the so called *Lautari* Roma). The battle we fought as Opera Nomadi consisted in the request of protection for Montenegrins and Serbians, because they are nonetheless citizen coming from a country involved in a war, and many of them results to be deserter, and for these questions there are international norms that are very clear about the impossibility to repatriate these subjects. ... But refugees by right are to be considered only those coming from Bosnia Erzegovina, but unless they were registered in the CIR census, they ought not to be considered as refugees. Unless he or she succeeds in demonstrating and documenting that he/she entered Italy after 1991. Unfortunately many of the Casilino 700 families are in Italy from before 1991 and for this reason it is difficult, almost impossible to state their condition as refugees. They can only demonstrate to be citizens of a country momentarily at war, which means, basically, nothing. Besides, the recognition of the refugee status can offer some benefit in the case in which there are existing structures dedicated to the welcoming and the assistance of these refugees. There are two projects for the Casilino 700 inhabitants, one in Fiumicino, and one in Latina, but still their construction has not even begun. Both have been stopped, for structural, political reasons. nobody knows well ...'<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Roberto Vallocchia, former responsible for the Casilino 700 encampment on behalf of the Opera Nomadi, 1996.

In November 1994, another census had been carried out by the Municipality of Rome and its Special Office for Immigration. A small piece of paper with the data of the familiar group and the hut number was given to Roma families in order to be affixed outside their huts.

*Picture 8.2: A civic number painted by the NAE Officers over a hut at the Casilino 700. Rome, 1994.*



Source: Photo by the Author

All were photographed (i.e. being booked), probably with the aim of a future displacement in another encampment, but the permission to resettle elsewhere, in some authorized dwelling, would only be granted to those who can be shown to be to be ‘... *in regola con la legge* (in accordance with the law)’<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Television interview to the former Mayor of Rome: Rutelli, F. (1995) Interview. In: **TG Regionale Lazio**. TV, Rai 3. 1995 Dec. 16. 19.00 hrs.

This point is very important and deserves some attention because it would become a local law only two years later, in 1996, and it would ensure many following actions like the 2008 Roman Pact for Lawfulness and the 2009 “Piano Nomadi”<sup>27</sup>.

This law, the Ordinance n.80, issued in 1996 from the Municipality of Rome City Council introduced an unprecedented exception for what concerns the Roma community and, more extensively, on social policies approaches. Firstly, because it introduced the idea of a ‘limited number of Roma in Rome’<sup>28</sup> and the idea of a limited number of encampments (13), for the largest part situated outside the city’s GRA<sup>29</sup>. Secondly because one of its clauses states that Roma are allowed to access to the Capital’s encampment only on certain conditions. Notably these conditions were the possession of a regular permit of stay, the enrolment of children in local schools and the absence of any criminal record<sup>30</sup>.

It is the first time in Italy, and it is unheard of in other countries, that the access to housing could depend upon the lack of a criminal record.

The philosophy upon which was based an institutional proceeding such as the Municipality Ordinance n.80/1996, reveals theoretical approaches that, if applied to population categories other than that of Roma would have provoked a massive popular unrest, but in this case, nobody opposed or protested against this proceeding.

The access to minimum citizenship rights, such as that of the right to a decent house, should be guaranteed to every human being, regardless of his criminal records.

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<sup>27</sup> See Chapter Four, note 78.

<sup>28</sup> 6.000 according to the 2009 Municipality’s Nomad Plan. Comune di Roma (2009) **II Piano nomadi** [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed March 2010].

<sup>29</sup> GRA (Grande Raccordo Anulare) is a ring, a circular road that surrounds and delimitates the whole city of Rome, separating the city from its suburbs.

<sup>30</sup> Ordinanza Comunale n.80, 23/01/1996.

I consider it to be very serious that it a suspension of such rights has been allowed for a whole ethnic group, and it constitutes an open discrimination and an evident attempt (although never openly expressed) to expel as many Roma as possible with the strategy of making their life conditions harsher, forcing them to leave in order to drastically decrease their number.

Nonetheless, the policy of systematic neglect gave its fruits.

In the situation of degrading and abandon described until now, we should not be surprised of the numerous announced tragedies happened in the encampment. The 10th December 1996 Samantha, a four months old child, died for the fumes exhaling from a small gas stove used to fight the cold.

Not even one year after, the 6th September 1997 the two sons from Romina, a young woman from one of the poorest families in the encampment, died in the accidental burning of their hut. During the crisis a group of Roma who realised what was happening tried desperately, without succeeding, to pull down the fences that separated the encampment from the near football fields<sup>31</sup> to use the sprinklers who were watering the field.

In this particular occasion a series of press conferences were organised, with the usual pilgrimage of both journalists and politicians, who happened to discover all of a sudden, “the Casilino 700 *favela*”<sup>32</sup>.

The mother of the child had been sued for homicide, because she had been accused of neglecting her child, but nobody seemed to realise the paradox of the water that was

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<sup>31</sup> See Picture 8.5.

<sup>32</sup> See Bibliography for a series of newspaper articles concerning the Casilino 700 encampment.

lacking at the Roma encampment (because built without planning permission<sup>33</sup>) and that was instead abundant at the football fields (also built without planning permission). Meanwhile, death continued to visit the encampment, and 1999 can be remembered as another tragic year.

In January little Salem, the son of Herkules and Zehra, died. The causes of death were attributed to the intense cold during that period. In the same month, Izmet, an old man died in unclear circumstances after an argument with members of another family group. Although it had been later demonstrated that the man's death was to be attributed to natural causes, the press eyes began to devote more attention to the encampment of Casilino 700.

The deaths of the little Salem and of the elder Izmet Halilovic began a week of media offensive, with an unending procession of journalists, which also included a TV show, recorded *in situ*<sup>34</sup>.

During this period everybody's attention was pointed to this encampment, until then ignored for years, and the Municipal Administration felt that they had to intervene somehow, prospecting solutions for a situation which was getting more and more risky and explosive by the day.

The measures taken deserve a certain degree of attention because they reflect the capability of project implementation in the field of social policies of an Administration who had been elected also for its commitment on themes such as solidarity and multiculturalism and in particular on Roma integration.

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<sup>33</sup> We have already discussed the dimension of informality in Rome at all levels, economical and urbanistic. The encampments, and the football fields situated in the area of the former Airport were all built without permission. Only that the football fields had water connections, and the encampment not.

<sup>34</sup> The analysis of the media's behaviour in that occasion should be made object of a treaty apart. The program quoted here, "Pinocchio" directed by Gad Lerner and broadcasted on RAI3, 02/02/1999, had been one of the worst examples of journalism, which showed at which point the anti Roma prejudice is spread, even in contexts habitually considered as enlightened and democratic.

The first person to arrive at the encampment had been the former Health Assessor at Rome City Council, Mrs. Giusy Gabriele.

In a short speech she promised the installation of a permanent Mobile Health Praesidium, conceived for sanitary emergencies. During this monologue-speech Roma continued to ask me about possible guarantees against new evictions and against Police *blitz*. Embarrassed and afraid, Roma asked me to talk to the Assessor.

Evidently their trust had been misplaced. She stated that ‘these problems are not of her competence’ and in answer to my further requests for clarifications I was accused of being an *agent provocateur* while the Assessor ran away in the direction of her car, followed by her assistant and with her fingers stuck in the ears while repeating that she did not want to talk to an “agent provocateur”<sup>35</sup>. Meanwhile the Roma were getting nervous and angry, they were saying that they did not need a Health Praesidium, that they were used to going to both Hospitals and doctors, that what they needed urgently was water and electricity, because poor little Salem, and Samantha, and Romina died because of cold and for the lack of water and electricity.

This most bizarre monologue-meeting was also witnessed by the volunteers from the Médecins Sans Frontières NGO’s, who in the two years of their intervention at the encampment, tried to do exactly the opposite, that is to help Roma to go to public local Health Services instead of creating for them differentiated structures at the encampment. The MSF volunteers had not been informed of the Assessor’s idea, nobody had contacted them, nobody asked for their advice. A very good example of networking and institutional strategies.

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<sup>35</sup> This was most intriguing since the Assessor was a member of the Party “Rifondazione Comunista”, the same identical party in which I was enrolled at that time. I have also to say that the events of the encampment provoked my resignation from this Party in December 2000.

Also the former Assessor to Social Policies, Amedeo Piva, already quoted here, reappeared at the Casilino 700 in those tragic days. The last time I had met him was during the 1996 partial encampment eviction. I remember vividly that in that occasion he refused to speak with a Roma because the person in question had a mobile phone, (evident sign of a consumer of luxury goods). I had also met him attending at several public conferences, but only to pronounce the words “Casilino 700” were enough to make him disappear. After the deaths, he was forced to return.

The interventions provided by his Department were limited to the re-supply of firewood, but the quantity was risible and constituted by huge whole logs so big to make it really difficult to be carried without the help of a car or to cut them with the little hatchets that Roma normally used for this task.

Besides, no criteria were established for the distribution. The firewood was simply downloaded in two parts of the area, half in the part inhabited by Bosnians and Montenegrins and the other half in the section occupied by Romanians and Macedonians.

Many Roma, especially single women, elder and families without a car, did not even receive a splinter of it. The Assessor Amedeo Piva, Catholic and sociologist, in his last visit at the encampment while facing the little door of a small shed that was used for meetings, closed for an inconvenient, asked to the people present ‘If by any chance would it be possible to call one of these little gypsies since they, it is known, can open doors in a minute!’<sup>36</sup>.

After that, the encampment fell again into the most complete abandon, and both Municipality’s rhetoric of solidarity and the ravaging media storm proved to be useless.

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<sup>36</sup> I have personally witnessed this episode that has been also reported by the magazine “Avvenimenti” (see Bibliography).



The whole question was then significantly handed over to the Prefetto<sup>37</sup>, and in December a co-ordination plan was agreed between the Municipal, Provincial and Regional administrations in order to put in practice new possible solutions and interventions while waiting for the ultimate complete eviction and subsequent destruction of the encampment (planned for June 1999). The proposals of the coordination plans were published in the Roman newspaper *il Messaggero* of the 27th January 1999.

‘... The areas individualisation -explained the Prefetto Enzo Mosino at the end of the press conference- will request a certain amount of time. From now anyway, we will start with hygienic and health interventions, accordant with the territory urbanistic destination as an Archaeological Park. This means that within 48 hours the General Manager for the ASL RMB<sup>38</sup> should present to the Rome Municipality Council Assessor Giusy Gabriele a program for the institution of a permanent Health praesidium at the encampment.

At the same time the Assessor Amedeo Piva should begin, together with the AMA<sup>39</sup>, a programme of rat extermination and reclaiming of land (already voted and approved in the Municipality Council) and will also provide for the installation of chemical toilets. Subsequently there will be also appointed a permanent garrison of both Police and Traffic Police for the surveillance of the encampment. Within ten working days, the Assessor to Public Works should provide the tracing of roads and their covering with *brecciolino*, also in order to facilitate the passage of possible ambulances or fire brigades lorries; the same Assessore should also provide for the installation of chemical toilets.

If within two weeks from now -guaranteed the Prefetto- together with Regional, Provincial and Municipal administrations should we

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<sup>37</sup> The role of the Prefetto normally is to deal with Public Order issues. It is most surprising that a problem regarding Social Services was handed over to the Police Administration, and dealt with as a problem of public order. Strangely enough, it is the same Prefetto, that makes the most pregnant observations (see: Cillis, L. (1999b). *Il Prefetto: il problema è trovare nuove aree*. **la Repubblica** Cronaca di Roma, 5 Mar. p.1.). After ten years the story repeats itself; the new regulations issued in February 2009 and concerning Roma encampments have been issued by the Prefetto. See: Regione Lazio, Commissario Straordinario per l'emergenza nomadi (2009) **Regolamento per la gestione dei villaggi attrezzati per le comunità nomadi nella Regione Lazio** Rome 18/02/2009. [online]. Available from: [http://www.prefettura.it/roma/index.php?s=download.php&f=Spages&okFile=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento\\_htm.htm&file=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento.pdf&id\\_sito=1199&download=1&ttt=1268738515](http://www.prefettura.it/roma/index.php?s=download.php&f=Spages&okFile=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento_htm.htm&file=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento.pdf&id_sito=1199&download=1&ttt=1268738515) [Accessed March 2009].

<sup>38</sup> ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale) is the Health District. The letter B indicates the Roman area of reference.

<sup>39</sup> AMA is the Roman Municipality agency charged with the duty of collecting rubbish, waste and recycling.

ascertain that we did not succeed with our sole forces, than we will ask the government for an extraordinary intervention. From that moment on, nobody could deny his or her responsibilities: because we all are responsible for this situation'<sup>40</sup>.

Of all these planned interventions only the Health Camper was being delivered, when the eviction was already beginning. The same Municipality that planned and organised the arrival of more than 30 million of Catholic pilgrims for the Jubilee, asked the Government for help to offer a decent accommodation for 1.200 persons, half of whom were under aged. For seven long years there had been no way of installing a water fountain in Casilino 700, and the same thing happened with the chemical toilets. Furthermore, the idea of placing the *brecciolino* proved to be totally useless and expensive. With the rain and the coming and going of campers and cars it was soon swept out by the surrounding overwhelming mud, thus destroying all the efforts to build a proper road there.

Of all the numerous regeneration interventions to which the Prefetto alluded not one was effectively made. Only the service generously offered by Police and Carabinieri continued, more menacing than reassuring, in a succession of controls, searches and *blitz*, which only caused the desperate further escape of many Roma.

The technique of terror applied in this case had reached its goal. This consisted in “discouraging” the Roma to remain in the encampment scaring them in such a way that many preferred to move away, for fear of being expelled or arrested.

If, as the same Prefetto said, ‘we are all responsible for the way in which the Casilino 700 inhabitants have lived until now’ then maybe the resignation of these institutional

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<sup>40</sup> Bussi, L. (1999) Casilino 700 sorvegliato speciale. **Il Messaggero** Cronaca di Roma, 27 Jan. p.31.  
Bussi, L. (1999) Crisi di ipotermia, domani i funerali. **Il Messaggero** Cronaca di Roma, 27 Jan. p.31.

representatives should be a moral imperative, after witnessing the incompetence and the cruelty with which they faced this humanitarian emergency.

In the meanwhile, the prognosis on Roma's destiny grew day by day more fanciful and bizarre, in the newspaper *il Messaggero* of the 12/02/1999 appeared these comments:

‘... where will the Roma from Casilino 700 go? *It is still undecided. After the eviction a series of meeting will begin between the Municipality and the Municipi to decide the new accommodation for the nomads.* Probably it will not be possible to find an accommodation for all of them, most of which are refugees from Kosovo or irregulars who have to be taken in charge by the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the Police Offices ...’<sup>41</sup>. (Italics mine)

Expulsion would be the most probable solution in the case of the irregulars, since no one came up (not even the NGO's) with the simple idea of a general regularisation *ad hoc* for the encampment, sort of an amnesty for humanitarian reasons. It is also surprising that the Municipality planned such a massive eviction, while ‘it is still undecided’ where all these persons were to be placed. The fact that ‘after the eviction a series of meeting will begin ... to decide the new accommodation for the nomads’ meant clearly that the Administration cynically hoped that following to the eviction, the number of Roma to be resettled would drastically be diminished.

After two months the proposal of the Rome City Mayor and of the Assessors Gabriele and Piva was forwarded to the press. Actually it looked more like a supplication than a proposal: ‘... if only each of the hundred municipalities of the Roman Province would take in charge only two campers each, we could be able to untie this knot in reasonable times ...’<sup>42</sup>.

The hypothesis of a Roma dispersion in other encampments to be built in the Province of Rome territories was in fact not much different from the position expressed by the

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<sup>41</sup> Picchi, B. (1999) Rutelli: Due famiglie di nomadi in ogni Comune. **Il Messaggero** Cronaca di Roma, 12 Feb. p.25.

<sup>42</sup> Cillis, L. (1999a) Casilino 700, il lungo addio. **la Repubblica** Cronaca di Roma, 5 Mar. p.1.

right wing party Alleanza Nazionale, who had always requested the expulsion of Roma communities outside the GRA<sup>43</sup>.

Furthermore, due to the legal status conditions of Roma population in Italy, these requests were obviously only a way to limit the number of presences in the Roman encampments.

The Council that wanted to be elected for its commitment toward the values of solidarity and citizenship proved instead cynical and uninterested in the destiny of thousands of refugees, destitute and young people.

It was also evident that in moving one or two campers, the extended family would be separated, and to this idea surely Roma would logically oppose a fierce opposition.

Worse than that, no economic activities were planned or implemented for the 1.200 Roma that in this way would be forced to find an occupation in the rural areas and villages of the Province of Rome. As we have seen here in the previous sections, Roma's economic niche is an informal one, and to be practised successfully must also be tightly connected with the presence in a metropolitan area, since these activities of recycling are completely impractical in a rural context.

Besides this, Roma were perfectly aware of the strong prejudices toward them and they would never have the necessary trust to separate into such small groups, deprived from the family ties that connected them not only to the Casilino 700 encampment, but also to all the other places where there was a Bosnian component<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> See note 30 in this paragraph.

<sup>44</sup> The Roman encampments which welcomed other Xoraxanè groups were: Tor Pagnotta, Casilino 900 (destroyed February 2010), La Barbuta, Muratella, Salone, Vicolo Savini (destroyed September 2005), Arco di Travertino (to be removed), Tor de' Cenci (to be removed), via della Martora (to be removed) Monachina, Salone Gordiani Camping River and Castel Romano (to be ameliorated).

### 8.5 The relocation in the new encampment of “via Salviati 2”

After the eviction of July 2000 the camp was destroyed and all the remaining inhabitants who were capable of demonstrating the possession of regular permits of stay had been transferred in the new encampment, where they still reside today (2010).

This new encampment was built on another Roman consular road, via Collatina and known under the name “Salviati 2”, to distinguish it from the other encampment in the same Via Salviati where a small group of *Rudari* Roma<sup>45</sup> was already living. Other families had been instead transferred to another encampment situated in via Tor de’ Cenci<sup>46</sup>.

All the other remaining Romanians, Montenegrins, Serbians and Bosnians without a permit of stay or with an expulsion proceeding pending, eloped elsewhere in search of shelter.

Many of these undocumented Roma went to increase the population of other unauthorized encampments. Like the ones situated in via di Salone and in via Laurentina or the one of Casilino 900. Many others changed town, relying on family connections established in other Italian cities, or even state, like in the case of the I. family who moved to Spain.

The encampment of via Salviati 2, where the regular Bosnians had been transferred, was and is until today, a large oblong of scorching cement, decorated with three or four miserable small trees. It is placed in the fields behind and along via Collatina Vecchia, in a completely isolated location. Less than twenty metres from the encampment and a few metres from the last containers are the railways tracks, distinguishable in the picture below, by its tower.

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<sup>45</sup> Serbian Roma.

<sup>46</sup> One of the authorized encampments that are going to be destroyed according to the 2009 Nomads Plan.

*Picture 8.3: The new via Salviati's encampment and the railroad's tower.*



Source: Photo by the Author. Summer 2005.

The containers were of the same kind of those used by the Italian Civil Protection for the temporary shelter of populations following natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods. These containers were therefore a sort of metallic box which becomes very cold during winters and extremely hot in summers. Besides, they were imagined for households far smaller than those of Roma, but in via Salviati (and in all the other authorized encampments where they are the norm), they can welcome up to six people each. They are composed by a small kitchen, a toilet, and two small rooms to be used as bedrooms.

*Picture 8.4: The new via Salviati's encampment and the containers.*



Source: Photo by the Author. Summer 2005.

Further, this new encampment has been placed in an openly unhealthy environment because is surrounded by a busy road such as via Collatina Vecchia (the road does not even have a sidewalk), and the Railway tracks, and it is far away from any services and infrastructures. The only enhancement is perhaps given by the fact that in 2001 the Foreign Offices of the Italian Police had been transferred just in via Collatina Vecchia. Finally, the encampment had been built without foreseeing any space, either private nor public, to be dedicated to the metal and object gathering, that as I have shown in the previous chapters of this work, constitutes the sole economic activity that Roma can practice. When, a few months after the resettlement was completed, the Roma tried to

build their own little sheds in order to store their materials, almost immediately the Urban Police proceeded with the demolition of these small self built structures.

Once again, the only possibility of having a legal income was represented by the *manghèl* (begging).

When we visit the Municipality of Rome's website, we can search for the space dedicated to the area of the old Airport that once had been Casilino 700.

An aerial photograph shows the archaeological findings of the area, and explains that:

‘Starting from 1996, numerous archaeological surveys have been conducted, on a total surface of 40 ha. In spite of the fact that the property of the whole area was under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Rome, the problems of intervention have been numerous, due to the presence of various unlicensed occupations: junkyards, sport fields and the indescribable situations of the encampments of Casilino 700 and 900’<sup>47</sup>.

Yet, after nearly ten years from the eviction, the situation on the airport area is only partially changed. The authorized encampments in Rome are fenced, surveilled by cameras and by guardians who control anybody entering the encampment. Visitors are requested to leave their documents and to declare the names of families or persons they are going to visit.

The public bids for the management of Roma encampments have always concerned only the part relative to the schooling projects, but since 2009, the Municipality of Rome began to issue also bids dedicated to the implementation of a service of guardianship, to be entrusted to private patrol companies<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Comune di Roma, (2003). **Scavi SDO Pianoro di Centocelle** [online]. Available from: <http://www.comune.roma.it/scavisdo/pianoro.htm> [Accessed May 2007].

<sup>48</sup> These bids have been blocked the 10/06/2009 by an Ordinance from the TAR (the Regional Administrative Court), but only because of administrative irregularities present in the same bid, which will therefore be presented again in the near future. See on this behalf the articles of the newspapers *Il Tempo* and *la Repubblica* at: Di Chio, F. (2009) *Il TAR sospende il bando. Campi rom, stop alla vigilanza. Il Tempo* Cronaca di Roma, 11 Jun. [online]. Available from:



Roma in Italy today have undoubtedly been considered mainly as a matter of public order and all the recent proceedings concerning this unrecognized minority have been dealt with as an emergency.

The first step toward this situation was a Decree of the President of the Council of Minister<sup>49</sup> issued in May 2008 which was entitled: “Declaration of the state of emergency in relation with the settlements of nomadic communities in the territories of Campania, Lazio and Lombardia Regions”. With this Decree the authority on the whole “Nomad issue”, has been significantly entrusted to the Prefetti<sup>50</sup> of the cities involved (Naples, Rome, Milan), a public figure which normally deals with security and public order issues.

The 2008 “Pact for Lawfulness in Rome”, also speaks openly of a “nomad’s emergency”<sup>51</sup> and on such basis it has continued on the same line of the aforementioned Decree, thus delegating the handling of the “nomadic encampments” to the same authority: the Prefetto of Rome.

The same “Plan for Nomads”, issued in 2009 by the Municipality of Rome is based on two main ideas: that of a ‘maximum number of Roma for Rome’<sup>52</sup> and on the removal

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[http://iltempo.ilsole24ore.com/roma/2009/06/11/1035111-campi\\_stop\\_alla\\_vigilanza.shtml](http://iltempo.ilsole24ore.com/roma/2009/06/11/1035111-campi_stop_alla_vigilanza.shtml) and: Lugli, M. (2009) Vigilanza nei campi nomadi. Il TAR blocca il maxi-appalto. **la Repubblica** Cronaca di Roma, 4 Jun. [online]. Available from: <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2009/06/04/vigilanza-nei-campi-nomadi-il-tar-blocca.html> [Accessed August 2009].

<sup>49</sup> DPCM 21/05/2008 **Dichiarazione dello stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunita' nomadi nel territorio delle regioni Campania, Lazio e Lombardia**. [online]. Available from:

<http://www.governo.it/Governo/Provvedimenti/dettaglio.asp?d=39105> [Accessed January 2009].

<sup>50</sup> The *Prefetto* (Prefect) is a governmental executive which represents the central government in the single Italian provinces. Its duties are that of controlling the local administrative bodies and that of the safeguarding of law and order.

<sup>51</sup> “Patto per Roma sicura”, first issued in 2007 and then reconfirmed and extended on the 29/07/2008, p.2. [online]. Available from:

[http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/node/N661730458/0413\\_patto\\_roma\\_sicura\\_29.07.2008.pdf](http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/node/N661730458/0413_patto_roma_sicura_29.07.2008.pdf) [Accessed February 2010].

<sup>52</sup> See Municipality of Rome’s Plan for Nomads, p.4. [online]. Available from:

of almost all the encampments still left into the city's area toward large areas outside the city's perimeter.

All these proceedings are clear indicators of the fact that the "Roma question" has been handled principally as a matter of public security, and that there has been no consideration whatsoever about the effects that these policies will have on Roma.

The forced massive evictions will cause the displacement of entire groups and their resettlement in far away, isolated places, thus severing all the social ties which Roma had established during these years. Children will be sent in new schools and new classrooms, thus forced to restart their studies all over again. Adults will be displaced far away from the places of their usual commercial activities, and this will affect in particular the women who practice their recycling activities on foot. Taken altogether, these measures will have a tremendous impact on a vulnerable population like that of Roma, and will certainly neither improve nor help the small processes of social integration which the community has undertaken until today.

I have already stated that many Roma that at the moment of the eviction did not have a permit of stay had moved elsewhere. One of these "elsewhere" places was constituted by the near encampment of Casilino 900, that in the while became the receptacle of the survivors from many other evictions, and it has represented a new and more desperate Casilino 700.

Below is an image of the Casilino 900 encampment as it can be seen from the Google Earth satellite:

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<http://www.comune.roma.it/was/repository/ContentManagement/information/N869782002/piano%20nomadi%20schede.pdf> [Accessed March 2010].

Picture 8.5: An aerial photograph of the Airport area, as visible from the satellite.



Source: Google Earth, June 2008. The dark green area on the left is what once was the Casilino 700 encampment after the eviction (in the middle is visible the archaeological site), and on the right, along via Palmiro Togliatti, the Casilino 900 encampment (Destroyed in January 2010). On the left, along via di Centocelle, are visible the abusive football fields and this was the place squatted in the spring of 2009 by a small group of Romanian Roma.

More recently, during the spring of 2009, other small groups of Romanian Roma have broken the fences which guarded the airport area and created a small settlement there. Police intervened and the occupants were evicted.

In June 2009 a part of the same group of families, supported by the members of the Popica NGO's, occupied an abandoned beer factory in via dei Gordiani<sup>53</sup>. After being evicted by the Police, the occupants came back to the encampment, from where they have been then re evicted again in November 2009. Even after all those years, there is always a new Casilino 700 in Rome.

*Picture 8.6: The Roma occupants of the "New" Casilino 700. The banner says: "We are Roma, not nomads, we want houses". Is signed Rom and Romni from Casilino 700.*



Source: Courtesy of Popica Onlus.

<sup>53</sup> See: (2009) Un centinaio di famiglie rom occupano una fabbrica abbandonata. **Corriere della Sera** Cronaca di Roma, 18 Jun. [online]. Available from: [http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/09\\_giugno\\_18/rom\\_occupano\\_fabbrica1601480105266.shtml](http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/09_giugno_18/rom_occupano_fabbrica1601480105266.shtml) [Accessed June 2009] and Gentile, C.(2009) Casilino 700, la polizia sgombera i nomadi. **la Repubblica** TV, 11 Nov. [online]. Available from: <http://tv.repubblica.it/copertina/casilino-700-la-polizia-caccia-i-nomadi/38945?video>. See also the official Popica Onlus's website: <http://www.popica.org/articolo.asp?articolo=150> [online], and the Amnesty International appeal: Amnesty International (2009) [http://www.amnesty.it/sgombero\\_rom.html](http://www.amnesty.it/sgombero_rom.html) [Accessed July 2009].

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **WINDS OF CHANGES**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

The history of the Casilino 700 encampment showed how the so called “Roma question” has been handled by local government agencies and NGO’s.

My analysis of the interventions put in practice until today have unravelled a dramatic series of failures which are the product of years of systematic institutional neglect, but have also underlined a group of factors that must be taken into serious consideration in order to correct what has been done insofar and implement different strategies to fight Roma’s social exclusion in Italy.

Before entering into the details concerning the practical intervention, it will be worth summarising these factors:

Roma do not have the strength and political weight of a nation state behind them, who could have acted as a mediator with the hosting countries. Due to the fact that are often still considered as foreigners, or lack the necessary documents, the Roma do not vote.

They do not have the possibility to elect their political representatives, and therefore do not constitute a sector of any interest for the average politician or political party. Other minority groups, although present in Italy from much less time than Roma, have organised themselves and have created Associations and other organisations for their

political representation.<sup>1</sup> In Rome there are small Roma NGO's, but the most consistent public bids can only be accessed by very large and long-time established NGO's<sup>2</sup>.

Romani issues instead, have been very much left in the hand of non Roma, who for more than two decades, have actually monopolised all interventions related to them.

Their safeguard, representation and protection has been entirely left in the hand of NGO's and other associations, or to the occasional goodwill of politicians, scholars and intellectuals who, for their own personal sensibility, are trying to help this minority organising solidaristic and support activities. However, it has not been enough to bring either the Italian government, or smaller statutory entities such as Rome's Municipality Council, or the Province, or the Lazio Region, toward the implementation of effective, positive actions of contrast against this situation.

Further, in contrast to other minorities<sup>3</sup> they have never occupied either an economical niche of any interest, or any strategic occupational sector. Their activities of recycling, second hand markets and, as in the case of Sinti, carnival owners, do not have any weight as possible economic lobbies.

Roma's high percentages of illiteracy prevented them being able to represent themselves by mean of an intellectual elite. In Italy there is only one Roma professor at the University, the Italian Roma Santino Spinelli. The high number of early school leavers, coupled with the difficulty in continuing the educational process until higher

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<sup>1</sup> The Municipality Council of Rome has an Institution, the City Consulta for the Representation of Foreign Communities (*Consulta Cittadina per la Rappresentanza delle Comunità Straniere*) and 23 "added Councillors" (*Consiglieri aggiunti*, 19 in the municipal Councils and 4 in the Municipality Council) which represents the foreigners' communities in Rome. Roma are not part of this "enlarged" Council.

<sup>2</sup> The Municipality public bids for the schooling of Roma children request the NGO to satisfy certain requirements (minimum three years of previous activity with Roma communities, demonstrate to have handled a quantity of money equal to the sum of the public bid to which it participated during the last three years and a deposit of variable amounts which would be different for each section of the bid.

<sup>3</sup> For example in cases such as those represented by Philippine female migrants, mostly employed in caring, or eastern European ones, mostly employed as builders.

levels of education in order to get a University degree, have prevented members of the Roma group to undertake professional careers.

For all these reasons, their strength as a group, and their power of bargaining with the institutions as a minority remains very weak.

## **9.2 Interventions in favour of integration**

In this paragraph I will summarise a series of practical proposals with the aim of delineating the most urgent integrate interventions that should be put into practice by policy makers and statutory bodies at all levels (and in particular at local level).

Due to the complexity and to the multiplicity of problematic factors who are affecting this group, these interventions should be anticipated by the creation of a network among all the agencies competent with the Roma question. For too many years institutional agencies have progressed independently from each other, without any clear and shared plan of intervention.

The first action should therefore consist in the establishment of an interdisciplinary commission among the Roma, institutions and academics.

For the statutory bodies, this network should include: the Municipality Council and representatives of the Ministries of Education, Internal and Foreign Affairs, Health, Welfare, members of the Municipal and National Police, the Ministry of Justice and the Juvenile Court

This mixed commission ought to produce a proposal for a national law regarding Roma minorities in Italy, avoiding the present disparity of treatment between the different Regions, Provinces and Municipalities, differences that are the only cause for Roma's present nomadism.

This should lead to the implementation of a national plan of action, dedicated to five main areas of intervention: censuses and amnesties, access to popular and alternative housing, job agencies and support to empowerment, legal assistance, schooling and schooling for adults.

### **9.2.1 Censuses and amnesties.**

As I have shown extensively in this work one of the elements concurring in determining Roma's marginalisation in Italy is their lack of documentation.

Their conditions of legal invisibility are widely known, and the first step to take in order to solve this problem is to proclaim a national and general amnesty to solve a condition that has now crystallised and prevents any possible intervention.

Former Yugoslavian Roma who arrived here during the '60's, still have to apply for a permit of stay, although they have been here in Rome for at least three generations.

Policy makers, who are recently waving the flag of urban insecurity ought to understand that Roma's legal invisibility will be inevitably leading to social exclusion, especially since the expulsions became a criminal offence. The regularisation, generalised to all Roma present on the Italian territory constitutes the only unavoidable step toward lawfulness and security

The first step is to undertake a census of the Roma population, and this census should serve to gather data with the aim of undertaking a systematic regularisation of the whole Roma population in Italy.

In the summer of 2008 the Italian right-wing government undertook the initiative of a census. However, the ground idea at the base, the methods used, and the general ignorance of Romani's issues have clearly shown that this operation has been only a



symbolic act to please political allies such as the Liga North, who for decades have undertaken a virulent racist campaign against Roma.

The purpose of this census in fact was not that of counting Roma population, but to control them<sup>4</sup>. Authorities and Organisations (the Red Cross) entrusted with the duty of gather data census in the various encampments, declared that Roma refused to be registered in the census, and preferred to move away avoiding registration.

My opinion is that this has happened because Roma have understood fully well what this census was really about<sup>5</sup>. In my personal research experience in fact I can state exactly the opposite. During the years I have gathered at least twice quantitative data at the Casilino 700 encampment, and never had any problem because the goal of the data gathering was made clear from the beginning<sup>6</sup>. In this case instead, the project has been put in practice with such a rudeness, arrogance and ignorance that it is a wonder that the Constitutional Court allowed such a proceeding.

It would have been much correct to rely for this task on the work of ISTAT, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, which is the only competent authority in Italy to register data for the periodical population census.

This goal could be reached by the simple introduction of a differentiated category within the general item “other housing condition”, because actually the national census

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<sup>4</sup> The census was generically dedicated to “Nomads” in order to avoid any accusation of racism. But the goal was that of counting “the whole population residing in nomadic encampments”. But the population of “nomadic encampments” is composed only by Roma. Also, the same proceeding states that “ethnic data will not be recorded”, but since Roma have not been included among the Italian minorities, the statement is an absurd because for the Italian law Roma do not exist as a specifically recognised ethnic group.

<sup>5</sup> In fact, if the goal of this operation was only to count the Roma, there were already the data gathered by the National Institute of Statistics during the periodical national censuses for demographic purposes. This data registers all the persons living at the time of the data collection, in the location where the census is done.

<sup>6</sup> I have completed the census already effectuated by the VIIth NAE group integrating their data with those of the families who arrived later on from former Yugoslavia. The goal was to have data ready in case that the CIR would accept to add these other Yugoslavian refugees to the already existing census (see par. 7.3.1.).

form does not make any difference among informal dwellings of different kind and they all go (encampments included) together into the larger “other housing unit<sup>7</sup>” category, thus preventing the census operators from a more detailed revelation. It would be sufficient to diversify this wide category to obtain a reliable and ethically correct quantitative revelation.

### **9.2.2 Access to popular and alternative housing**

The difficulties for Roma in having access to healthy and decent housing condition lies principally in the fact that they lack the requisites necessary to be included in the rankings for the social housing classification.

The ranking positions are determined by scores assigned on the base of certain conditions: number of household components, income etc., but the highest score comes from having been subject to a documentable eviction order, but the eviction from encampments have not been included in the category. Therefore Roma families can never be able to reach the minimum score necessary.

Then there are also other factors, more intangible, that block the implementation of effective policies of inclusion. One of these factors, maybe the most prominent, is the opinion that the Roma population in Italy is largely constituted by nomads.

In the official documents released by the most diverse institutions, even in the more recent ones, they are identified, according to the text author’s fancy, indifferently as

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<sup>7</sup> This definition is in use since the 1971 census and it include: “Other housing units: a hut, cabin, shack, caravan, houseboat, barn, mill, cave or other shelter used for human habitation at the time of the census”. See: ISTAT, (2001) **2001 Census**. Rome: ISTAT [online]. Available from: <http://dawinci.istat.it/MD/dawinciMD.jsp?a1=o0GG0c0I0&a2=mG0Y8048f8&n=1UH90E09OG0&v=1UH0SH09OG00000> [Accessed January 2010].

Nomads, Zingari or Roma<sup>8</sup>. The word *Zingari* is considered by Roma as a derogatory definition and it is used very rarely also by institutions. On the other hand, the name *Nomad* is completely inappropriate to define the communities living in the Roman encampments because, as I have already demonstrated, they are sedentary residents<sup>9</sup>.

But the use of this last term can prove very useful, especially when they are forced to live in precarious dwellings. In this case, to call them Nomads, helps to justify the existence of the encampments and, maybe secretly, to nurture the hope that one day they will leave and move elsewhere, following their “natural” inclinations to nomadism.

The degraded life that the Roma lead in the encampments, even in the so called “authorized” ones, is certainly the main cause of their social exclusion. The encampments represent today the evidence of a segregation produced just by all these institutions that should have instead helped to integrate, and not to separate.

For these reasons, Italy has been made object of several critics and reprimands by the European authorities (Council of Europe, 2006 a, b, c).

The new, authorized encampments are controlled by cameras and surrounded by wired fences. To have access to the encampment, one must submit a request for entrance to the Municipality’s XIth Department, and must accept to leave his documents to the patrol at the entrance, and to have his bags searched, exactly like it happens when one visits a correctional institution. Also, if somebody from one of the families hosted in the

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<sup>8</sup> See on this behalf the different sections of the Municipality of Rome’s website if we digit the word “nomads”. In the official public bid for the schooling of Roma children for the years 2005-2008 it is undifferentiatedly used the terms “Roma” (in the title), and then, in the text, the terms “Nomads” or “Nomadic communities”.

<sup>9</sup> The sedentariness of the large majority of the Roma groups in Rome is nowadays an acquired data, and it is impossible that it is unknown by Institutions.

encampments commits a serious criminal offence, he/she is forced to leave the encampment with all of his family<sup>10</sup>.

There are no precedents of such treatment toward Italian citizens. The access to housing is not dependant on someone's criminal records<sup>11</sup>, and this proceeding openly violates the basic principles of equality among all human beings as stated by the third Article of the Italian Constitution<sup>12</sup>.

A more inclusive and open minded policy, should instead favour the progressive inclusion of Roma families into social housing apartments' lists, exactly like it has already been done in the 70's for the communities of Italian Roma<sup>13</sup>.

### **9.2.3 Job agencies and support to empowerment:**

Another important factor that is responsible for Roma's social exclusion, is their intermittent access to income.

The deep-seated prejudices toward this community are at work also in the interventions made by the state and its agencies. Sometimes, the distrust toward this group is openly expressed even in the official documents.

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<sup>10</sup> Regione Lazio, Commissario delegato per l'emergenza nomadi nella Regione Lazio, (2009) **Regolamento per la gestione dei villaggi attrezzati per le comunità nomadi nella Regione Lazio**, Rome 18/02/2009. [online]. Available from: [http://www.prefettura.it/roma/index.php?s=download.php&f=Spages&okFile=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento\\_htm.htm&file=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento.pdf&id\\_sito=1199&download=1&ttt=1268738515](http://www.prefettura.it/roma/index.php?s=download.php&f=Spages&okFile=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento_htm.htm&file=/FILES/allegatinews/1199/regolamento.pdf&id_sito=1199&download=1&ttt=1268738515) [Accessed March 2009].

<sup>11</sup> Comune di Roma, Ordinanza Comunale n.80, 23/01/1996 and, more recently (2009), the new norms regulating the encampments. See in Bibliography: Regione Lazio, Commissario delegato per l'emergenza nomadi nella Regione Lazio (2009).

<sup>12</sup> 'All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country'.

<sup>13</sup> A good example of the many different possibilities concerning this aspect are presented by Vitale (2009a) in his book on the possible policies to be implemented for the welcoming of Roma and Sinti; the book contains also a wide range of case studies from all over Italy.

For example, in an institutional project directed toward the working integration of Roma living in the VIIth District, the proposing statutory body affirmed that:

‘... it is *inborn* in the nomadic culture the non acceptance of impositions such as the school attendance or the repetitiveness of some types of work’<sup>14</sup>.

It is obvious that if the institutions themselves are so openly distrustful of the possibilities of integration, the policies that this same institution produces, will carry the imprinting of this distrust.

Moreover, there are other general factors to be taken into consideration. I have shown here (see par. 4.2.) in detail the large presence of the informal economy in Italy and how the largest majority of the economic activities carried on by Roma, lie in the territory of this shadow economy.

The presence of this widespread informal sector has constituted a resource for many Italians and migrants (Roma included). The diffusion of this black market sector has a double effect. On one hand, it represents an element of worry for economical institutions such as the OSCE and the World Bank, but on the other hand the same informal sector, as demonstrated by scholars such as Theodor Shamin and Serge Latouche, offers in a country deprived of any welfare assistance, the possibility of living on the small incomes deriving from this informal activities, and so to build up their lives.

The proposal is to offer a possibility of regularisation to all persons engaged into informal works like in the case of Roma, that of recycling (iron, copper and other metals in the case of men) and of second hand markets (an activity mostly carried on by Roma women and adolescents).

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<sup>14</sup> Circonscrizione VII, Deliberazione of the 28/03/1995. N. Prot. 8512. Italics mine.

At the moment, this type of occupations due to their informality cannot offer any mean of regularisation. The help should consist in supporting the Roma in creating their own social cooperatives, and in this way, regularise their position getting a permit of stay for job reasons.

Another possibility is the one concerning the activation of forms of micro-credits. In particular this tool could be used to support for example Roma's female economy like in the case of the second hand markets. It is a way to support and encourage also female emancipation, especially in situations of parental conflicts or divorces.

#### **9.2.4 Legal assistance:**

The impossibility to have access to the rankings for popular and social housing, lies also in the widespread conditions of juridical and legal invisibility of many Roma and of their families.

Numerous are in fact those who, even when residing on our territory since decades, are still considered as foreigners and ought to comply with the regulations concerning the permits of staying.

It is extremely difficult for them to obtain the Italian citizenship because of the factors already analysed in par. 6.2, and due to the fact that the citizenship in Italy is based on the *ius sanguinis* and not, as in France for example, on the *ius soli*. Also it is difficult to obtain the permit of stay, because the different laws that have regulated the matter of immigration, have never taken into account the specific problems of this group.

Lastly, a widespread fear of all political sides for possible negative electoral results has prevented even left wing forces and parties<sup>15</sup> to propose what is according to me the only possible solution: a new generalised amnesty *ad hoc* for Roma.

The behaviour of the competent institutions is in large part made of a see-saw attitude in balance among control and neglectfulness, and it is visible both in what institutions do (i.e. the schooling projects) and in what institutions do not do (i.e. the resolution of the housing emergency for Roma) and underlines the schizophrenia of the institutional interventions.

Roma have very peculiar legal situations, especially when arriving from countries such as the former Yugoslavia where it is very difficult to obtain birth certificates, degrees and other official documentation. During the war many records have been destroyed. This complicated situation made the fortune of the vast community of Roman lawyers, upon which Roma rely for their needs, because in lack of a free legal assistance. To be honest, many NGO's in Rome have activated centres dedicated to the migrant's legal assistance, but often, even when they decide to look after a Roma cause, the tangled legal situations makes them surrender. Also, NGO's and associations, prefers to deal with cases concerning either human rights or other issues politically more relevant (for example appeal for refugees etc.) and are never very eager to undertake the defense of a Roma for simple crimes or felonies. Among these simple crimes there is for example the expulsion order, that has now became, after the so called Bossi-Fini Law, a penal

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<sup>15</sup> In Rome, in the Summer of 2006, posters signed by "the Capital's municipal majority" (i.e. the whole left-wing "Ulivo" coalition) were asserting: 'While in Rome 8.000 persons have been removed from the non authorized encampments, and closed down nomad encampments by tens, the Berlusconi government, of which Alemanno has been a Minister, has allowed indiscriminate arrivals without any rules or regulations at the borders'. Not to mention other controversial initiatives such as the so called "Patto per la legalità" undersigned also by the then left-wing Mayor W. Veltroni (Pact for Lawfulness) which comprehends a series of proposals made by Mayors of different cities in Italy, including measures and steps to be taken against urban criminality. (See also Vitale, G. (1997) *Roma e lucciole, sul patto di legalità braccio di ferro in Campidoglio*. **la Repubblica** Cronaca di Roma, 4 May, p.45).

crime instead of an administrative one, like it was for all the previous laws. The presence of an already issued (and not fulfilled) order of expulsion, prevents the subject from any possibility of solving his situation. But since the real expulsions with deportation toward the country of origin are very rare, the person in question can remain on our territory in total lack of any protection and right and exposed to every possible danger. Besides, because of the former expulsion, even if she/he manages to find a job, they cannot in any way undertake it legally, always because of this former expulsion proceeding.

It is necessary therefore to promote legal support by mean of a board of lawyers who have specific competencies on international laws issues, that voluntarily will offer their services to solve this critical situation offering their skills and consultancy.

#### **9.2.5 Support to schooling and literacy plans for adults:**

This is the most important part of this memorandum. As I have shown already here, Roma in Italy have never had the possibility of giving origin to their own middle class. There are some personality of Roma origins who are musicians (Santino Spinelli, who is also a University Professor), artists (Bruno Morelli) prominent figures and Roma activists and intellectuals, like Eva Rizzin, Dijana Pavlovic, Yuri del Bar, Nazzareno Guarnieri, Voislav Stojanovic; but their number is still very limited, and their presence in key sectors of society like that of professionals, managers, or high level civil servants, is still non-existent.

What has happened in other places such as Britain, with Afro Caribbeans and South Asians or France with Maghrebi countries, never happened in Italy for Roma, also due to the aforementioned problems concerning the documents. In the United Kingdom,



people coming from former colonies arrived in England already as British citizens. Today we have second and third generation South Asians completely integrated in the British society, and many occupies important public and professional roles like lawyers, magistrates, University professors and some are even members of the Parliament.

Professionals and intellectuals belonging to a certain ethnic group can constitute an incentive and a model for the younger generations. Besides, due to their public role, they can act as public spoke persons in favour of this minority. A University professor or a lawyer has certainly more chances to be listened to than a recycler that lives in a hut.

The existence of some Roma professionals is central for the development of a Roma *intelligentsia*. Without this passage, the hopes for integration will remain in the hand of the organisations who should support them and who have all the advantages in keeping them in the state of intellectual and material poverty in which they are living. This step could have been made easier if during these decades it would have been allowed to them the possibility, like for other ethnic minorities, to develop a Roma middle class. Unfortunately, due to numerous and diverse factors that I have described in this research, members of these group have become pariahs belonging to an urban *lumpenproletariat*, that will never even have the possibility or the hope of becoming working classes<sup>16</sup>.

From my non Italian colleagues, I have often received proposals for stages and collaboration directed to members of the Roma group with a high school degree. Unfortunately, I could never send them anybody because at the present, we do not have young Roma enrolled in Universities, and able to use one of the vehicular languages of

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<sup>16</sup> See on this behalf: (2008) Bottom of the Heap. The dismal lives and unhappy prospects of Europe's biggest stateless minority. **The Economist**, 19 Jun. [online]. Available from: [http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=11579339](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=11579339) [Accessed July 2008].

the European Union. I think this is an excellent indicator of how our country has completely neglected this part of the population, and how useless had been the interventions made until today.

In 2007, the Italian newspaper *la Repubblica* (Serloni, 2007) published the news of a young Roma girl enrolled in a Roman high school (Lyceum). It is news that ought to be greeted with joy, but being a single case, especially when we think that schooling projects have been now going on for more than thirty years, it represents the indicator of a failure that we cannot ignore and that must be used to reason critically in order to propose other initiatives which will be more efficacious.

Besides, also in the case of education the problems concerning their legislative status seriously affect the youngest in their possibilities of access to education. This problem concerns not only the Roma, but also any other foreigner of school age present on our territory. The minor of school age, even when undocumented and deprived of a permit of stay, has a right to be involved in the cycle of compulsive schooling, but if he/she has not regularised his position, will never be able to obtain an official degree, because he only has the right to be enrolled and study, but not to obtain the final Diploma. In order to have access to the final exam, it is necessary to be legally resident in Italy<sup>17</sup>.

Institutions invested money and efforts in the schooling projects, with the aim of extending also to this minority the right to education, nonetheless the same institutions allow that entire familiar groups and children live in small containers scorched by the sun. Until present times, it still continues to offer exclusively this alternative, even

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<sup>17</sup> The Prodi government through his former Minister Giuliano Amato in accord with Minister M. Lucidi tried to solve this important contradictory knot but never succeeded in transforming this project of law into an effective, workable one, and the following Berlusconi government did not seem interested in putting this issue into his political agenda.

worsening it, because the new authorized encampments are placed in hard-to-reach areas, badly connected and deprived of any infrastructure or service.

Local governments therefore are continuing with irresponsible tenacity with the policy of the encampments, and furthermore, they are building new ones, this time even more far from the city, in order to make them as invisible as possible.

The numerous, recent evictions in order to remove the Roma encampments from the inner city negates the few processes of integration ongoing in the territories. For example the ones realised by Roma women with their commerce of second hand garments and objects in the local markets<sup>18</sup>, and the same schooling projects, in which the Municipality put so many efforts and funds.

It is in fact evident, that the numerous evictions and the continuous displacement, with the following eradications, are traumatising and creating practical problems for minors who are already experimenting an unbelievably hard living condition.

Basically, when Roma children go out from school, they go back into their hut or container, to their parents without permit of stay and perennially stressed by the precariousness of their lives.

Further, as I have shown here in par. 7.4, the sole quantitative measurement regarding Roma enrollments and presences in schools is not a sufficient tool to allow an in-depth evaluation on the effectiveness of these projects.

It is important, and most of all, necessary, that institutions undertake a serious and deep critical review of what has been done so far toward the schooling of Roma children. For example, a large part of the funds dedicated to the schooling projects, ends up being spent on the accompanying Roma pupils from the encampments to the schools. I think

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<sup>18</sup> See par. 5.1 note 19.

that Roma parents can easily manage to fulfil this duty without any help, and the funds could instead be used in a practical support to education through lessons in the afternoon, with specialised and qualified teachers and tutors that will help the Roma child filling the eventual gaps.

The management of the intercultural question, whose laboratory is in Italy today represented by the public compulsory schools, has been left in the hand of a militant amateurism. In absence of any control, this has managed to create privileged channels with the institutions for reasons often not noble, such as the creation of electoral lobbies, that here in Italy, above all countries, found their expression in the culture of the public bids, and in the repetition of the ancient Roman system of the *clientes*.

The data and the cases I have presented here insofar, are showing how this approach of complete delegation to the third sector, and the absence of any control, produced the situation we are witnessing. For this reason it is very important that the European authorities continue to keep their surveillance on Italy regarding policies toward the Roma question. If it had not been for the attention of the EU authorities, Roma's condition could have even been worse.

### **9.3 Winds of changes: Silvana's story**

I would like to conclude this work with the story of a good friend of mine, Silvana, a Romnì which I met in the Casilino encampment in 1992, and with whom I have developed a personal friendly relation which has lasted up to date. Her life-history is an example of the winds of changes which are investing the Romani youth today, and of a possible way of emancipation through her work as an intercultural mediator.

There are many factors involved in social change processes. These factors are

interdependent between them and different in kind and in intensity, and in their mutual interaction, they produce a continuous pressure for the subjects involved.

Among such factors there are formalized aspects like the one implicit into the relationship between Roma and non Roma communities and which is inescapable since *Gadjos* are imposing it on Roma.

This has to do with institutions, social workers, police, tribunal, municipality, schools, hospitals and all the other institutional agencies that are somehow related to the group.

The other aspect is less definable, and attains to symbolic and cultural domains that emerge from the contact between the two worlds of Roma and non Roma.

Although Roma culture has been able to preserve through the centuries most of its traditional characteristics, the contact with the non Roma society has introduced, especially for women, different aspirations, possibilities and models to refer to. These range of possible “other” futures created the occasion to engage in life projects very diverse from the traditional ones. Schooling, involvement into NGO’s project, political participation, are all factors of both emancipation and vectors of social change, as in the story of the three sisters from the S. family I met in Casilino 700.

I have known the S. sisters, Senada, Svetlana and Silvana, when they were respectively 9, 12 and 15 years old. Now they are grown women and lead very different lives.

Svetlana and Senada, after their experience in school<sup>19</sup>, are both married with children.

Svetlana is living in an encampment in Bari, a city in the South of Italy with her husband. Senada lives in Rome, in Casilino 900, another shanty dwelling destroyed in January 2010. We have reported their story elsewhere here, in regard to the success of schooling projects for Roma children.

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<sup>19</sup> See par. 4.2. for Senada’s and Svetlana’s story.

Here I want to deal instead with the choices made by the older sister Silvana, whose destiny changed when her participation to a training as a Health cultural and linguistic Mediator led her to work in a project with Médecins Sans Frontières and other NGO's. This occasion, as we will see, turned into a possible way of emancipation.

**Silvana:** When Médecins Sans Frontières arrived, I asked them if I can work with them, to help them. And when Francesco [*the project officer in charge of the project*] asked me I started working for them. I started to help them with the van, and when children or women arrive for the doctor's consultation. They didn't know how to speak, so I was a translator and I wrote the names, do the report. All the children that came for a visit. I started working in 1997. First it was a probation, then when he saw that I was good at working he took me everywhere, to the Conferences at the Municipality, at Caritas.

Then also the others began to work, like Tihana. Then Tihana fell in love with somebody and eloped with him and I was the only one working.

Later also my brothers started working, and then they were joined by the two Macedonian guys, Zecko and Esad, and from other Bosnians.

We made a *stage*, went to a school, and helped Médecins Sans Frontières who also helped us to gain some money for our family; so we did the school exams.

We studied medical things, and how to behave with ASL [*Local Sanitary Agency*], in Hospital, everything. We also studied where we come from, from India, and all the rest.

Then we also worked at CDS [*Casa dei Diritti Sociali*]. Three girls were working, normally on Wednesday and Friday, because these days there were a lot of people coming, so I went to work there and I do lots of things, like a secretary. We'd go together with Manfred to the Caritas and to other meetings.

I liked to work. Maybe someone doesn't want to work with Italians, but I liked it.

I like to work to make a better future. I also did not want to marry that early and still I do not want to do it. I first want to have some fun, work, find a job to make a living, no?<sup>20</sup>.

Since then Silvana has been working with various NGO's and has participated in many projects. Although she never succeeded in getting her secondary school diploma, she is managing to carry out her life with the small salary from the CDS (Casa Diritti Sociali). Since the year 2004 she worked with this NGO as a social worker at their migrant's

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<sup>20</sup> Interview 15 February 2004.

welcoming centre: she got her driving license and bought a new car of her own.

Silvana continues to live with her family in the new encampment constituted by the families coming from the former Casilino 700. Her appearance, dressing and lifestyle are heavily criticised. Her changes and her choices have provoked in the beginning ostracism and an estrangement from her community:

‘... Now at the encampment they see me differently, like if I am not a part of the gipsy people anymore, there are always complaints: the way I dress... they look at me with a weird eye... me, I feel good... I do not feel so much different from them, I will always be what I am and I am proud of what I am... but life in the encampment is the same as it has always been... well everybody knows how is the gypsy life... and for me... is always like this ...’<sup>21</sup>.

Her reputation at the encampment slowly became that of an outcast, eyed suspiciously by the inhabitants:

‘... I think it is that they are jealous. When they see me coming home, they look at me with this expression... though there are many that joke with me, both men and women. But men very few... men joke with me like if I also were a men like them, but women, they see me as a weird person, in their opinion. The way I dress... they would say: “Ah look at “the Italian“. Girls are also jealous because I am also a girl but I go out, I have fun...

Small children will come to me and speak, but the grown ones will not... they see me as different. Only young girls of five, ten years old, but the grown ones no... they eye me suspiciously...

M: But do they ask you anything? Information or other stuff?

S: No no, absolutely they don’t ask me anything ...’<sup>22</sup>.

Silvana was seen and perceived as “dangerous”. She did not conform to the social expectations of the group, she violated the invisible borders of gender, therefore she is like a loose cannon, which is left to deal only with the less important part of society, children. She constituted a menace because she represents a different possibility, one that if accepted and practiced, could shake the patriarchal system foundation.

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<sup>21</sup> Interview November 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Interview November 2006.

Until the end of the year 2005, Silvana has been working for the “Erythros NGO”, as a cultural mediator for Roma. At first she had been assigned to assist her own encampment’s residents, but the prejudices and gossips against her were so incessant, and created a continuous state of distress that she was forced to ask to be removed and assigned to another encampment. During this period she was still living at her parent’s place in the new Casilino 700 (Salviati 2).

During the winter of 2006 Silvana decided to leave her family, going to share the house of her boyfriend, an Italian young man who owns a Restaurant in Rome.

The atmosphere at the encampment was heavy and could not be endured anymore, so she moved after the last big argument with her family. Her decision to cohabit without getting married with a non Roma had been heavily criticised from her family. Furthermore, she never revealed to her boyfriend that she was a Roma, for fear that he will leave her. Some months later, she decided to make things clear, revealing her true origins to the boyfriend. Immediately he declared that this was a matter of no importance, because he loved her so much, that race or ethnics did not mean anything to him.

In March 2007, after a see-saw period of alternate decisions and resolutions, he has been introduced to Silvana’s family and finally accepted as one of them (an event that has been celebrated with an impressive banquet at the encampment).

Silvana actually lives with him, and continued for a certain period to work for the same NGO until the summer. In June she decided that working with the Roma community was too trying for her nerves, and that time and place of work (20 Km from Rome along the via Pontina), and risible wages conditions led her to the decision of abandoning the NGO’s sector.



The intermittence of Silvana's salary and its small amount<sup>23</sup> would have never allowed her to rent a house on her own and either to lead an independent life. If things went wrong for any reason with her love relationship, she will be forced to face once more the perspective of returning home and stay at her parents place.

In the last months of 2009 she came back to work with the "Erythros NGO" and has been assigned to work with migrants always as an intercultural mediator. The encampment's population has finally accepted her and the problems she used to have with her encampments' neighbours have disappeared.

Silvana's quest for emancipation leads us to analyse what has been done for Roma people up to date, and forces us to undertake radical changes in our approach, and in institutional politics, toward ethnic minorities. In the following paragraph I will give some practical example of how sociological imagination and empirical observation coupled together, can help us in the task of producing effective policies of support and integration.

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<sup>23</sup> NGO's like the CDS where Silvana is working are depending on public and institutional funds for their projects. Very often the institution is late in paying, as a consequence the NGO's are also slow in paying back their employees. It is not in the least uncommon to be paid one or two months late. If there is no support from the families of origin, it is very hard to rely only on this sole income for a living.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 10.1 Foreword

The aim of this work has been to make a contribution to the studies on urban ethnic poverties and social exclusion through the analysis of a form of a contemporary metropolitan ghetto which differs from the ones studied by urban sociologists in the past and from those examined by the relevant international literature<sup>1</sup>. This “new” ghetto appears also to bear no similarities with the ones that had existed in Rome earlier.

Thus, on a general level, the purpose of this research was that of analysing the present shanty towns in Italy studying both the phenomenology and the functions of the informal metropolitan dwellings and of the national and ethnic groups who inhabits them today.

In order to do this I have examined the situation of a Yugoslavian Roma community in Rome and that of a group of Moroccan migrants who were also living in the same unauthorised dwelling, and their processes of socio-economic inclusion and exclusion.

The multiethnic encampment of Casilino 700 where this action research took place, was created in 1992 and then destroyed in the year 2000, when its population was partly relocated in the new authorised encampment of via Salviati 2 where they are still residing.

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<sup>1</sup> Par. 2.2.

It is a single case study, but through the analysis of the history and the events which have occurred at and around the Casilino 700 it has been possible to draw more general conclusions on a model, and more specifically on the Italian model of approach to urban poverties which in this particular case has included also ethnic relations.

I have thus singled out a paradigm of intervention toward Roma and migrants, which bears the distinctive mark of the specific Roman economic, historical and geographical context into which it was placed<sup>2</sup>.

The history of these two communities and that of the encampment itself, will be therefore used as a tool, a magnifying lens through which to analyse both Maghrebi and Roma's social and living conditions and the policies enacted toward them.

## **10.2 Empirical material covered in the thesis**

The empirical material which I used in my research work has resorted to a very wide range of sources because the object of study intersected many areas of interest and connected many different key sociological themes.

Urban poverties and new ghettos, national and international migrations and related social policies but also, more specifically, to analyse the case represented by Roma and Moroccan migrants who inhabit the shanty town object of this study and their processes of integration.

The first task has been that of offering an historical introduction dedicated to the aspects concerning the geographic and socio-historical context, and specifically Rome's long tradition of housing and economic informality. For this reason I have relied on historical

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<sup>2</sup> Parr. 4.2; 4.3; 5.1.

sources concerning the last hundred years history of Rome's development, in order to enable the reader to gain a certain degree of familiarity with the research context.

This introductory part served to contextualise the object of study in the Roman setting and it has been necessary not only because this city has specific peculiarities which needed to be made explicit to the non Italian reader, but also because Rome's today situation concerning urban poverties has been largely shaped by its past<sup>3</sup>.

Then, moving from the general level down to the micro sociological one represented by the Casilino 700 encampment, my sources have centred more specifically on the subjects of Maghrebi migrations<sup>4</sup> and Roma's situation in Italy<sup>5</sup> and in Rome<sup>6</sup>.

In particular, an important contribution to my research came from the large corpus of institutional acts produced by the various local governmental agencies (Lazio Region, Province and Municipality of Rome) and directed toward the Roma group.

I have chosen to focus my analysis of institutional actions on issues such as that of housing and of children education. This choice has been motivated by the fact that these interventions have been the most systematic ones, and because of their importance and direct connection with the processes of integration and social inclusion.

On the other hand, being an ethnographic action research, a large part of my empirical materials has been for a consistent part constituted of my audio and video interviews fieldwork notes the personal and direct observation of contexts which I registered during my research in different occasions with the different social actors: at the encampment (with Roma and Moroccan inhabitants) inside institutions (interviewing

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<sup>3</sup> This analysis of the new forms of ghettos has recurred to the sociological literature on this subject which is reported in Chapter Two. See also Parr. 4.1 and 4.1.1.

<sup>4</sup> Parr. 4.1.2; 4.3; 4.3.1; 6.1 and 6.2.

<sup>5</sup> Par. 4.3.2.

<sup>6</sup> Parr. 5.1.2; 5.2; 5.3; 6.3 and ff.

politicians, administrators, school teachers, social workers and NGO workers)<sup>7</sup> and outside the encampment, with a section of this work being dedicated to the relations between the neighbourhood inhabitants and the shanty town dwellers<sup>8</sup>.

### **10.3 Theoretical importance of the thesis**

At a general level my research constitutes a contribution to the study of the new forms of urban ghettos which I have defined, following Wacquant's theorisations, as *hyperghettos*<sup>9</sup>, a term that as I have shown in the course of this work, is very apt to describe today's Roma encampments.

The choice of concentrating on a single case study has been motivated by both theoretical and methodological reasons.

Theoretical, because as I have said before, in the encampment of Casilino 700 is possible to retrace a story common to all the other encampments present in Rome, thus transforming my research from the analysis of a single case study to the analysis of a model of institutional actions toward poverties, migrants and ethnic minorities.

Methodological in first place because being an action research conducted in such a large territory (the airport area covered 35 ha.) and with a population of more than 1000 persons, the long duration of my fieldwork has been necessary to gain familiarity, to get known and to know them and to demonstrate my reliability as a person, first then I have been effective as a researcher.

Secondarily, because my intention was that of studying long time processes such as that of socio-economic integration and education, which due to their nature needs a longer follow up in order to be fully understood and evaluated.

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<sup>7</sup> Chapters Seven and Eight.

<sup>8</sup> Par. 5.4.

<sup>9</sup> See par. 2.2.

Thirdly, because in my analysis I have included also all the other social actors involved with the encampment: institutions, NGO's, schools and Italian inhabitants of the district where the encampment was placed.

In order to cover all these aspects properly, it has been absolutely necessary a continuous fieldwork activity and a deep, well established and solid relation with the research context.

The importance of my research work can be summarised in the following points: A) to my knowledge this is the first urban action research with such an in-depth and long follow up.

This element has been an extremely important factor not only because it has had a decisive impact in determining the quality and the richness of the ethnographic material gathered, but also because it has allowed the acquisition of informations on the integration processes in order to build a diachronic overview of the situation and to evaluate the interventions in a long time perspective.

B) Further, my research has taken into account all of the social actors involved, i.e. the Casilino 700's inhabitants, the Italian people living in the neighbourhood, the local administrators, statutory bodies and NGO's which have worked within the encampment. Under this aspect my work is important especially for what concern the policy advice because the analysis of these aspects gave me an extremely clear overview of the dynamics at work in the encampment, outside the encampment, in the institutions and in the third sector, thus offering a viable perspective for the evaluation of the quality, impact and success of the institutional and NGO's interventions toward the Roma.

#### **10.4 Recommendations for future interventions**

There were two main research questions in this thesis. The first was analytical and it concerned the individuation and the analysis of the factual elements which have concurred to determine the Roma present days' situation in Rome, thus identifying the factors which have led to Roma's marginalisation and socio-economic exclusion. The second, on a more operative level, was meant to serve as a tool for an exhaustive critical revision of what has been done insofar by statutory bodies, in order to develop new strategies to solve a situation which has become chronic.

This long follow up revealed that the situation of Roma people in Rome suffers from a series of critical errors and neglect which have triggered and maintained mechanisms of segregation and social exclusion, worsened by the living conditions that Roma communities experience, in the encampments where they live.

The empirical observations have shown a situation of prolonged extreme socio economic exclusion, further aggravated by the lack of global and viable institutional policies of inclusion and support.

One of the main factors which caused Roma's marginalisation must be identified with the institutional policies of the encampments' creation, which have legitimated an ethnically based segregation thus leading to a situation of open, although undeclared, *apartheid*.

There are two definitions for the word "apartheid" according to the Oxford English Dictionary. One is historical, and refers to the system of racial segregation practiced by the South African government until 1990. The second definition instead, describes the word *apartheid* more extensively, including in its meaning also that of "any other form of (especially racial) segregation".

The many Italian Regional Laws issued during the '80's have created the encampments for Roma. It has been therefore an institutional action which created these places, under the belief that this form of housing would have been more adequate in order to respect a supposed traditional Roma attitude, a belief based on the assumption that Roma were a large undifferentiated category characterised by the practice of nomadism. Quite on the contrary, as also my research shows, of all the Roma and Sinti population present today in Rome only the Sinti and few other groups continue to occupy economical niches tied to these practices<sup>10</sup>. Both the Xoraxanè group studied by me in this work and the majority of the other Roma groups in Rome who are residing into the Roman encampments are long term residents.

Further, these same Regional Laws, also stated that the settlements should have been placed in areas close to public transport and furnished with services and infrastructures (De Angelis 2009:97). This part of the laws though, has never been implemented and the encampments have traditionally being placed in the worst and most unhealthy places: close to railways, next to large roads with heavy traffic or away from everything, in desert areas where it is difficult even to reach a bus line<sup>11</sup>.

In Chapter Nine I have underlined a series of major area of interventions that should be implemented in order to offer a real support toward integration to members of this community. These points have been summarised as such<sup>12</sup>:

Census and amnesties

Access to popular and alternative housing

Job agencies and support to empowerment

Legal assistance

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<sup>10</sup> See par. 4.3.2, note 64.

<sup>11</sup> See par. 8.5.

<sup>12</sup> See parr. 9.2.1 – 9.2.5.



Support to schooling and literacy plans for adults

These are in my opinion, the issues which should be immediately addressed by local administrators and NGO's, and these interventions ought to be guided in first place by the institutional will of putting an end to the system of the encampments.

There can never be a real integration if a sector of the population is coerced to live into enclosed, segregated dwellings away from every services and infrastructures. Fifty years of encampments has only led to a permanent state of ghettoisation and to further discrimination, and it has strongly contributed to the diffusion of an anti- Roma feeling among the resident non Roma population.

This feeling has progressively increased among citizens of the already neglected Roman peripheries, abandoned like the Roma themselves to cope alone with their own necessities, and it has been skilfully used by politicians and administrators of almost all political parties, and used as an argument during election times.

Finally, from a sociological perspective, there is an urgent need for more research in this field, especially in the light of the new institutional actions included in the 2009 Nomads plan, and on the effects that these wave of planned evictions and relocations will have on the Roma community<sup>13</sup>.

Following further this line of research, there is also the necessity to investigate more in-depth the institutions' behaviours and actions, for example following the methodology of the institutional analysis already applied successfully in France to schools and other public institutions (Lapassade 1995; 2006).

Lastly, it is not possible anymore to postpone the need to fill, with fresh contributions, the void of research, monitoring and documentation activities left by the disappearance

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<sup>13</sup> See par. 8.5.

of the Lacio Drom group and concerning in particular the theme of Roma and Sinti education.

The NGO's which in Rome are today entrusted of the schooling projects have until now failed to produce reports, research or any other form of public documentation on a very important step toward integration which has been almost completely delegated to them since the year 2000.

After almost twenty years of research in this field, I am firmly convinced that there is a need for a more serious and serene evaluation of what has been done insofar and for more transparency on the results of these interventions which in my opinion are in need of a decisive reassessment.

Certainly the present Italian situation does not seem to offer many occasions of optimism, in particular for the Roma<sup>14</sup>. But both the laws of the Italian state and the Constitution on which it has been founded contain important indications on matters such as citizenship, rights and integration, and they clearly show the direction.

According to me it is to these indications that institutions and NGO should stick when they plan their policies and interventions, and they all are clearly stated in the article 3 of the Italian Constitution:

‘All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacle of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country’.

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<sup>14</sup> See for example the evictions announced in the 2009 Municipality of Rome's Nomads Plan (par. 8.5).

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